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ABSTRACT

This report provides information on how Hawaii's students performed on the 1987 and 1988 administrations of the Stanford Writing Assessment (which was adopted as part of Hawaii's Statewide Testing Program). Included in the report are a state summary of the performance of students in grades 3, 6, 8, and 10 and an analysis of the assessment results for each grade. The report serves as a model for analysis of the Stanford Writing Assessment results and is intended to help schools and districts analyze their own data and use relevant information and analytical processes from the document to plan and direct student learning. The report's first section, an overview, discusses: purpose, background of writing test administrations, description of the Stanford Writing Assessment, scoring procedure, approach to program analysis, curriculum validity, and general summary of student performance. The second section contains the analysis of assessment results, presenting stanine distributions for each grade separately. The report's third section presents conclusions and recommendations for improving student performance in writing. Appendixes contain scoring rubrics, matches of writing dimensions with performance expectations, and matches of writing dimensions with language arts program objectives. (SR)

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PROGRAM ANALYSIS OF STANFORD WRITING ASSESSMENT GRADES 3, 6, 8, and 10

Spring 1987 and Spring 1980 Administrations

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PROGRAM ANALYSIS OF STANFORD WRITING ASSESSMENT GRADES 3,6,8,and 10

Spring 1987 and Spring 1988 Administrations

CS212459

Office of Instructional Services/General Education Branch □ Department of Education □ State of Hawaii □ RS 89-7025 □ October 1989

FOREWORD

With the charge to improve thinking, listening, speaking, reading, and especially writing, schools and districts are giving primary attention to the improvement of basic skills. An important part of the improvement process is the assessment of student performance in relation to identified goals and standards. The Stanford Writing Assessment, adopted as part of the Statewide Testing Program in 1985, provides valuable information about students' writing ability, their strengths and weaknesses, and individual instructional needs.

This document is the first to present an analysis of the Stanford Writing Assessment results. The data from the Spring 1987 and Spring 1988 administrations for grades 3, 6, 8, and 10 have been juxtaposed to enable readers to view and interpret the results more holistically and comprehensively. It also includes the scoring criteria which can be incorporated by teachers in the instruction of writing. It is being distributed to all elementary, intermediate, and high schools with the hope that it will be useful, in conjunction with other measures, in the assessment and improvement of writing.

Charles T. Toguchi

Charles T. Toguchi, Superintendent

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword i

I. Overview 1

A. Purpose 3

B. Background of Writing Test Administrations 3

C. Description of the Stanford Writing Assessment 4

D. Scoring Procedure 5

E. Approach to Program Analysis 6

F. Curriculum Validity 6

G. General Summary of Student Performance 8

II. Analysis of Assessment Results, 1987 and 1988 13

A. Grade 3 Stanine Distributions 15

B. Grade 6 Stanine Distributions 20

C. Grade 8 Stanine Distributions 25

D. Grade 10 Stanine Distributions 30

III. Conclusions and Recommendations 35

IV. Appendices 41

A. Scoring Rubrics 43

B. Matches of Writing Dimensions with Performance Expectations . . 103

C. Matches of Writing Dimensions with Language Arts Program Objectives 107

I. OVERVIEW

I. OVERVIEW

A. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide information about how Hawaii's students performed on the 1987 and 1988 administrations of the Stanford Writing Assessment. Included in this report are a state summary of the performance of students in grades 3, 6, 8, and 10 and an analysis of the assessment results for each grade. General conclusions and recommendations for improving student performance in writing are presented in the last section.

This report serves as a model for analysis of the Stanford Writing Assessment results. Schools and districts should analyze their own data and use relevant information and analytical processes from the document to plan and direct students' learning.

B. Background of Writing Test Administrations

In the spring of 1983 and 1984, the Competency Based Measurement (CBM), which included a section on writing, was administered to third graders. The Holistic and Trait Scoring Criteria for Writing Instruction was developed and used to score compositions on expressing feelings, giving information, promoting ideas, and entertaining.

The Stanford Writing Assessment was adopted as part of the Statewide Testing Program in 1985 and was administered to third graders in 1985 and 1986. Test results were analyzed and presented briefly in the 1985-86 Stanford Achievement Test analysis document.

In spring 1987 and 1988, the Stanford Writing Assessment was administered to all students in grades 3, 6, 8, and 10. Figures 1 and 2 display the number of students tested at each grade, assessment level, and category of writing for the 1987 and 1988 test administrations.

1987 ADMINISTRATION

Grade	No. Students	Assessment Level	Category
3	12,386	Primary 3	Explaining
6	11,008	Intermediate 2	Describing
8	10,527	Advanced	Describing
10	9,231	Task 2	Describing

Figure 1

1988 ADMINISTRATION

Grade	No. Students	Assessment Level	Category
3	12,986	Primary 3	Reasoning
6	11,630	Intermediate 2	Narrating
8	10,089	Advanced	Narrating
10	8,644	Task 2	Narrating

Figure 2

C. Description of the Stanford Writing Assessment

The Stanford Writing Assessment addresses four categories of informative writing: Describing, Narrating, Explaining, and Reasoning. The aims of the writing assignment in each of the categories are:

1. DESCRIBING - To visualize the given topic, identify the salient features, and organize this information in some clear order using descriptive language.

2. NARRATING - To select the characters, events, and other elements to tell a story as clearly and interestingly as possible using a story framework with a beginning, middle, and end.

3. EXPLAINING - To identify the essential steps of a process and to explain or give instructions exactly and concretely so that the reader understands the process.

4. REASONING - To order and express opinions about a controversial issue and to maintain and support the point of view taken.

The Statewide Testing Program schedules one category of writing to be assessed in the spring of each year for grades 3, 6, 8, and 10. The categories are announced beforehand, a topic appropriate to the category and experiential background of the students is selected, and students write for twenty-five minutes on the topic.

In each of the four categories, five dimensions of writing are assessed: General Merit or overall impression, quantity and quality of Ideas, effectiveness of Organization, appropriateness and clarity of Wording, and Syntactic Structure or arrangement and flow of words and sentences. Although the criteria for effectiveness in the five dimensions vary for each category of writing, the following questions provide generic rating guidelines.

1. GENERAL MERIT - What is the reader's impression of the piece of writing as a whole? Does the writer have something worthwhile to convey and is it presented clearly? Is the composition coherent and does it read well?

2. IDEAS - Does the composition present a quantity of significant and relevant ideas? Are the ideas expressed forcefully and clearly?

3. ORGANIZATION - Does the composition have a clear, overall plan from beginning to end? Are the ideas and details ordered in a logical and coherent structure or pattern that is appropriate for the task?

4. WORDING - Is the wording precise, vivid, varied, and appropriate for the task?

5. SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE (SYNTAX) - Is there an effective and efficient use of sentence structures? Does the composition read smoothly?

D. Scoring Procedure

Using the Stanford Writing Assessment Program's "Criteria for the Assessment of Writing," the Test Development Section adapted scoring criteria, or rubrics, for the four categories of writing for each grade (Appendix A). Criteria assessing effectiveness of writing for the five dimensions were developed for the below average or Poor rating (1, 2), Average rating (3, 4, 5), and above average or Superior rating (6, 7).

Scorers, or raters, were specially trained in examining and interpreting the rubrics, applying the rubrics to sample papers, and writing detailed critiques of the papers. The systematic handling of issues such as illegible papers, off-topic papers, and the use of nonstandard English was also determined. Central to the training and scoring process was reliability, defined as a measure of precision or consistency between and among the raters.

Each piece of writing was rated independently by two scorers who used the rubrics to determine the rating for each dimension. The ratings of the two scorers had to be within one point (e.g., 5 and 6); if there were a discrepancy of 2 or more points (e.g., 4 and 6), the scorers discussed and justified their ratings until consensus was reached and the ratings were within one point. The ratings of the two scorers were then averaged and converted to stanines. (See the Stanford Writing Assessment Program Guide for the conversion tables.)

E. Approach to Program Analysis

The following framework guided the analysis process. With minor modifications or changes in focus, the framework may be used by districts, schools, or teachers in the assessment of test results for use in instructional planning and delivery.

1. How well does the test measure the program efforts? (Curriculum Validity)

   a. How well does the test content (categories and dimensions) reflect the major program emphases?
   b. Is there test content that measures what is not taught until later in the school experience?
   c. Are there major program emphases that are not measured by this test?

2. How are the students performing? (Student Achievement)

   a. How well are the students doing statewide?
   b. Are there variations among the test categories and dimensions?
   c. Are variations as expected? Why or why not?

F. Curriculum Validity

Curriculum validity was determined by: 1) comparing the assessment categories and the modes of discourse, 2) matching the five dimensions with Performance Expectations (PEs), and 3) matching the assessment categories and dimensions with the Language Arts Program Objectives.

1. The four categories of the Stanford Writing Assessment Program, described in C above, correspond to the modes of discourse (Language Arts Program Guide, p. 2-61) as follows:

Category	Mode of Discourse
Describing	Description - discourse that paints a verbal picture or image and arranges those images in a logical pattern
Narrating	Narration - discourse that tells a story or relates an event--usually telling what happened, and where it happened
Explaining	Exposition - discourse that informs, explains, or instructs
Reasoning	Argumentation - discourse that convinces or persuades an audience to accept a point of view or proves or refutes an issue

Although the match between the assessment categories and the modes of discourse is very close, only one category is tested for each grade per year. In the course of the students school career, then, they will most probably be tested only once in each category. Accordingly, the assessment data for a particular grade from one year to the next will reflect the results of different students writing in a different category. The implications are: data from other instruments should be used and the assessment results should not be interpreted as longitudinal data.

2. Appendix B shows the matches of the five dimensions assessed with the writing PEs in Cluster C of Foundation Program Objective I, "Develop basic skills for learning and effective communication with others." There is a direct match between the assessment and all the PEs except one: "Writes letters for various purposes and audiences." In addition, the Language and Spelling subtests of the Stanford Achievement Test, 7th Edition, also address the PE, "Uses words, sentence patterns, and the conventions of written language appropriately." The results of these subtests are reported in a separate document.

   A comparison with the two writing Essential Competencies (ECs) shows no match for one and a partial match (writing directions) for the other.

3. Matches of the five dimensions and the Language Arts Program Objectives are shown in Appendix C. The test is minimally effective in assessing the attainment of the writing objectives. Several major emphases of the writing curriculum are not measured or are only indirectly addressed in the assessment.

   a. The student's understanding and use of the writing process are not tested. Because the assessment is a timed, first draft, there is little or no opportunity for prewriting, revising, editing, and rewriting.

   b. A curriculum emphasis that may or may not be assessed, depending on the topic, is writing across the curriculum. The topics selected are largely experience-based, since factual knowledge in a content area should not be a test variable. Consequently, the different demands of writing in various content areas are not addressed.

   c. The purposes of writing (to express feeling, to provide information, to promote ideas, to entertain, and to perform social functions) are subsumed in the categories and topics, some more explicitly than others, for example, promoting ideas in Reasoning or entertaining in Narrating.

d. Thinking is an essential part of the writing task. It is evidenced in writing in such ways as the selection, relevance, and significance of ideas; the organization and relationships of the ideas; the logic, coherence, and clarity of the composition; and the reasoning powers employed for certain topics. However, thinking skills are only indirectly addressed in the scoring rubrics in General Merit, Ideas, and Organization. They are demonstrated most prominently in the Reasoning category.

e. The affective objectives such as valuing writing, discovering meaning, developing positive attitudes about writing, and using writing as a tool for personal growth are not addressed.

The analysis for curriculum validity reveals that the Stanford Writing Assessment is effective in assessing the modes of discourse and most of the PEs and one of the ECs, but is extremely limited in measuring the Language Arts Program Objectives for Writing. The limitations imply that district and school plans for assessment and improvement should include a variety of assessment alternatives and instruction in writing should address all of the PEs and writing objectives. (See "Conclusions and Recommendations," page 37.)

G. General Summary of Student Performance

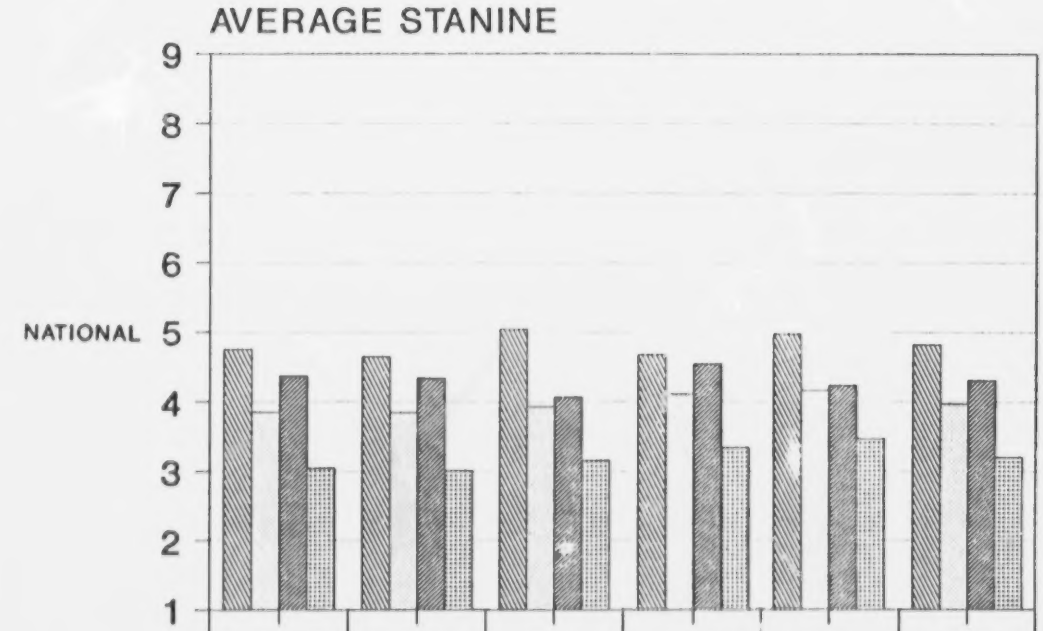
1. Average Stanines for Grades 3, 6, 8, and 10 for 1987

   Except for Organization (5.03) in grade 3, the average stanines for all the dimensions in all the grades in 1987 were below the national average stanine (5) as shown in Figure 3. The total average stanine (an average of the five dimensions) for grade three (4.81) came closest to the national at .19 of a stanine below the national average. Those for the other grades were 1.02 stanines below for grade six, .70 below for grade eight, and 1.80 below for grade ten.

2. Average Stanines for Grades 3, 6, 8, and 10 for 1988

   In 1988 the total average stanine for grade three (5.95) was almost one stanine higher than the national average stanine with the averages for Organization (6.12) and Wording (6.36) the highest among the five dimensions. (See Figure 4.) The average stanine for grades six and eight were consistently close to the national average stanine for all dimensions with total averages of 5.04 stanines for both grades. The results for grade ten indicate average stanines that still do not meet the national norms for all of the dimensions. General Merit (4.11) was the highest indicating that the ratings for the overall impression of the papers were better than the separate parts. The total average stanine for grade ten (3.82) was 1.18 stanines below that of the national.

HAWAII WRITING SCORES
S87



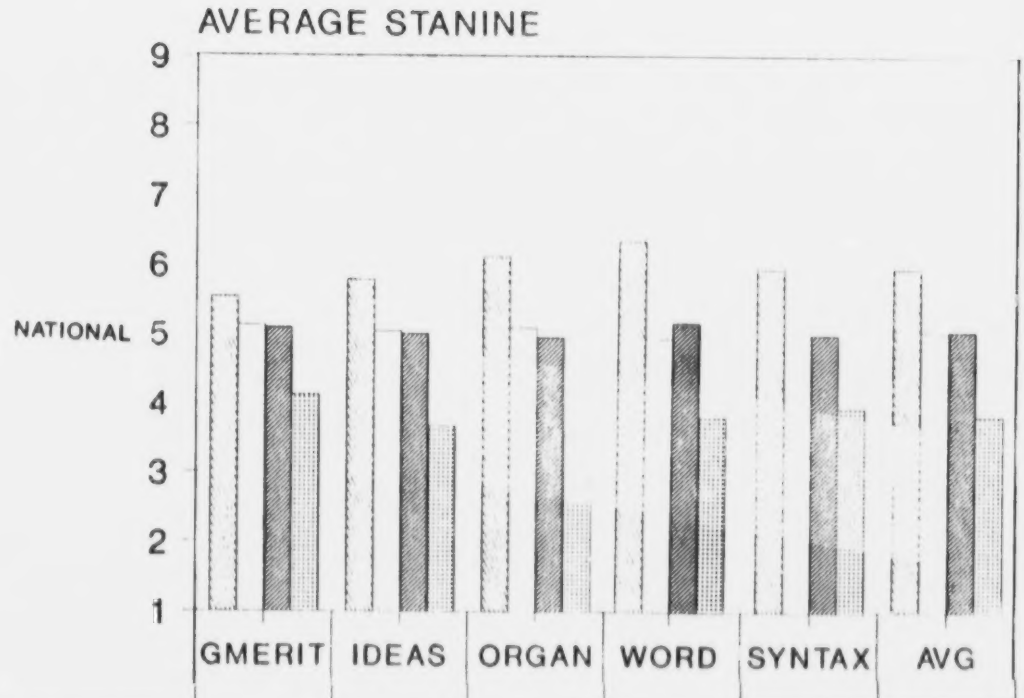
	GMERIT	IDEAS	ORGAN	WORD	SYNTAX	AVG
GRADE 3	4.75	4.64	5.03	4.96	4.67	4.81
GRADE 6	3.85	3.84	3.93	4.11	4.15	3.98
GRADE 8	4.36	4.33	4.06	4.54	4.22	4.3
GRADE 10	3.04	3.01	3.15	3.34	3.46	3.2

DIMENSION

GRADE 3 GRADE 6
GRADE 8 GRADE 10

Figure 3

HAWAII WRITING SCORES
S88



	GMERIT	IDEAS	ORGAN	WORD	SYNTAX	AVG
GRADE 3	5.53	5.78	6.12	6.36	5.96	5.95
GRADE 6	5.12	5.04	5.09	4.95	4.98	5.04
GRADE 8	5.08	5	4.95	5.17	5	5.04
GRADE 10	4.11	3.66	3.59	3.81	3.94	3.82

DIMENSION

GRADE 3 GRADE 6
GRADE 8 GRADE 10

Figure 4

3. Comparison of Average Stanines for 1987 and 1988

The comparison of the average stanines for 1987 and 1988 indicates that gains were made in average stanines at all grade levels in all five dimensions. The total average stanine gains were 1.14 stanines for grade three, 1.06 for grade six, .74 for grade eight, and .62 for grade ten. The greatest gains were made in grade three for Wording (1.40 stanines) and in grade six for General Merit (1.27). The smallest gains were made in grade ten for Organization (.44), Wording (.47), and Syntactic Structure (.48).

The variations of Hawaii's assessment results and emerging trends are fairly consistent with those at the national level, which characterize grades three and six students as more "powered by enthusiasm" and willing to share their thoughts with the reader. Nationally, junior high and high school students made only limited increases in realizing their writing potential. In spite of greater maturity and competence, the willingness, vitality, and intellect were generally absent in their writing.

Another consideration in analyzing and interpreting the assessment results is to take into account the subjective nature of the writing assessment, which gives rise to many variables, most critically (in spite of controls) in the testing and scoring situations. The variations in the assessment results for the two years (1987 and 1988) and among the four grades (3, 6, 8, and 10) may be due in part to learner, instructional, test administration, and scoring variables such as:

- Different students writing in different categories which have different objectives and demands.
- Different grades writing in different categories in same year.
- Selection and wording of the topics and the degree of consistency in matching the intent of the assessment.
- Prompts that are "two-pronged" ("funniest or most embarrassing") and those that give students open choices ("best tasting _____").
- Assessment administration factors, such as instructions, environment, time.
- Scoring rubrics and the degree of consistency in matching the assessment criteria; the delineation between and among below average, average, and above average criteria; and the delineation between and among grade levels.

- Variations in the scorers themselves that may affect inter-rater reliability among scorers at each grade level (intra-grade) and among scorers between and among different grade levels (inter-grade).

II. Analysis of Assessment Results 1987 and 1988

II. Analysis of Assessment Results, 1987 and 1988

This section contains an analysis and comparison of the percentage of students in each of the stanine groups--below average stanines (1, 2, 3), average stanines (4, 5, 6), and above average stanines (7, 8, 9) for 1987 and 1988. The category of writing and the topic for each year is given and an analysis of the students' performance is presented separately for grades 3, 6, 8, and 10. Although a comparison of the results for the two years is made, as stated previously, the test data reflect the results of different students writing in a different category for each year.

The General Merit dimension is examined in detail for all the grades. Major features of the other dimensions (Ideas, Organization, Wording, and Syntax) are highlighted. Finally, the average score, which is used as the overall score, is analyzed and summarized.

A. Grade 3 Stanine Distributions

For the 1987 administration, the writing category was EXPLAINING. The topic was: "Explain how to make the best tasting _____in the world. (e.g. popcorn, fudge, jello, lemonade, toast, instant saimin, etc...)"

For the 1988 administration, the writing category was REASONING. The topic was: "To cut costs, the school is thinking about stopping school lunch service. Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not?"

Figure 5 displays the percentages for the stanine distributions for 1987 and 1988. Figures 6 to 10 provide a graphic display of the same percentages for the five dimensions.

Dimension	Year	Below Av. (1, 2, 3)	Average (4, 5, 6)	Above Average (7, 8, 9)
General Merit	1987	21%	61%	18%
	1988	17%	46%	37%
Ideas	1987	25%	60%	15%
	1988	14%	49%	37%
Organization	1987	21%	62%	17%
	1988	11%	49%	40%
Wording	1987	26%	65%	9%
	1988	9%	54%	37%
Syntax	1987	19%	66%	15%
	1988	9%	33%	58%
Average	1987	22%	63%	15%
	1988	12%	46%	42%
National Norms		23%	54%	23%

Figure 5

1. General Merit

   In the below average stanines, grade three students' performance is better than the national norm by 2% in 1987 and by 6% in 1988.

   The above average percentage (37%) increased by 19% and was 14% above national norm in 1988. This marks the greatest movement of third graders--from the average to the above average stanines.

   The combined average and above average percentage was 79% for the first year and 83% for the second; both percentages are above the national norm of 77%

2. Other Dimensions

   Student achievement improved from 1987 to 1988 in all stanine groups for the other four dimensions. The below average group showed a decrease ranging from 10% in Organization and Syntax to 17% in Wording.

   In 1988 the above average group surpassed the national norm with gains of 28% in Wording, 23% in Organization, and 22% in Ideas. The biggest increase was made in Syntax, a gain of 43%, higher than the national norm by 35%.

   A significant 91% of grade three students was in the average and above average groups for Wording and Syntax, 14% more than the national norm.

3. Average Percentages

   A comparison of the 1987 and 1988 average percentages show that grade three students made dramatic gains in all the stanine groups. The below average group which was already better than the national norm (22% to 23%) in 1987, improved the next year by another 10%.

   In 1988 the above average group increased by 27% and the combined average and above average groups surpassed the national norm (77%) by 11%.

   It is apparent that Hawaii's third graders have improved significantly in all areas assessed by this instrument. In all five dimensions there was a consistently positive change: decreases in the below average stanine groups and a striking increase in the above average group. The 1988 results exceed the national norms in all areas.

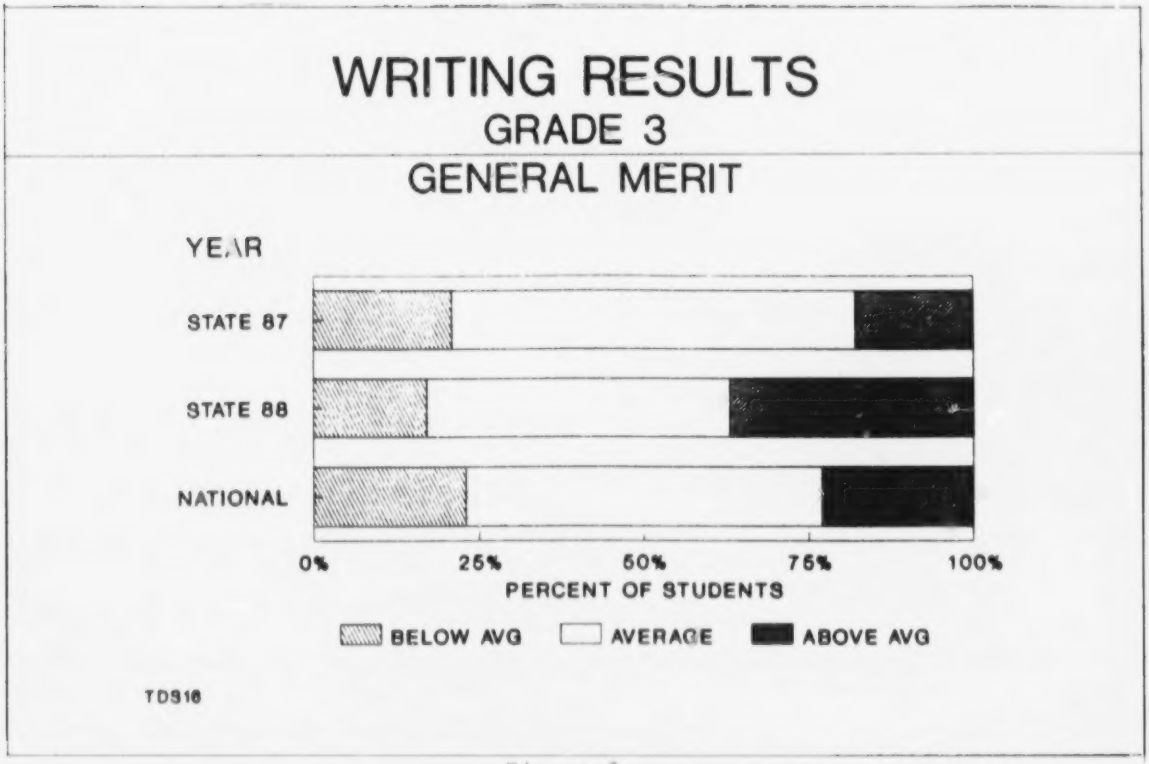


Figure 6

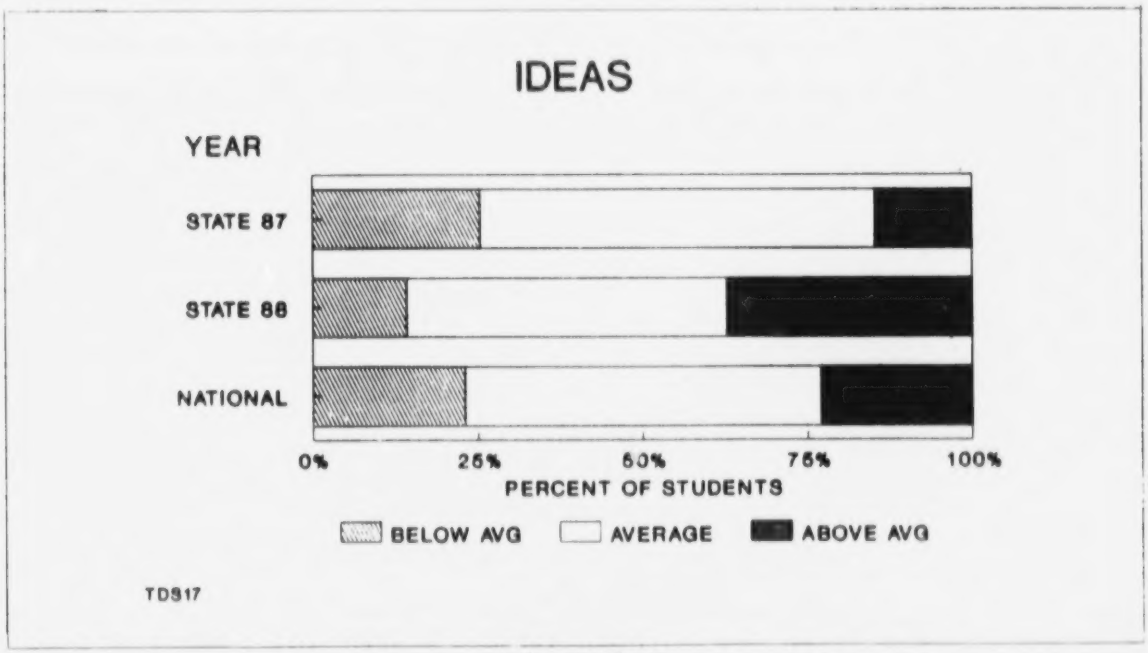


Figure 7

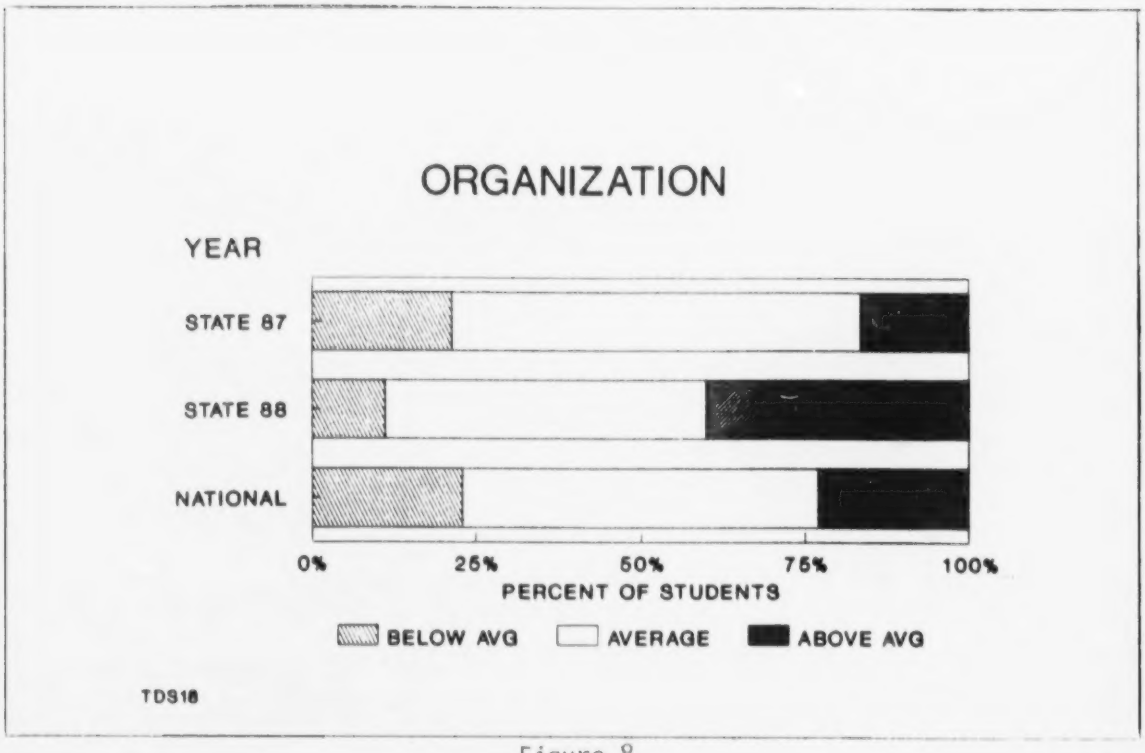


Figure 8

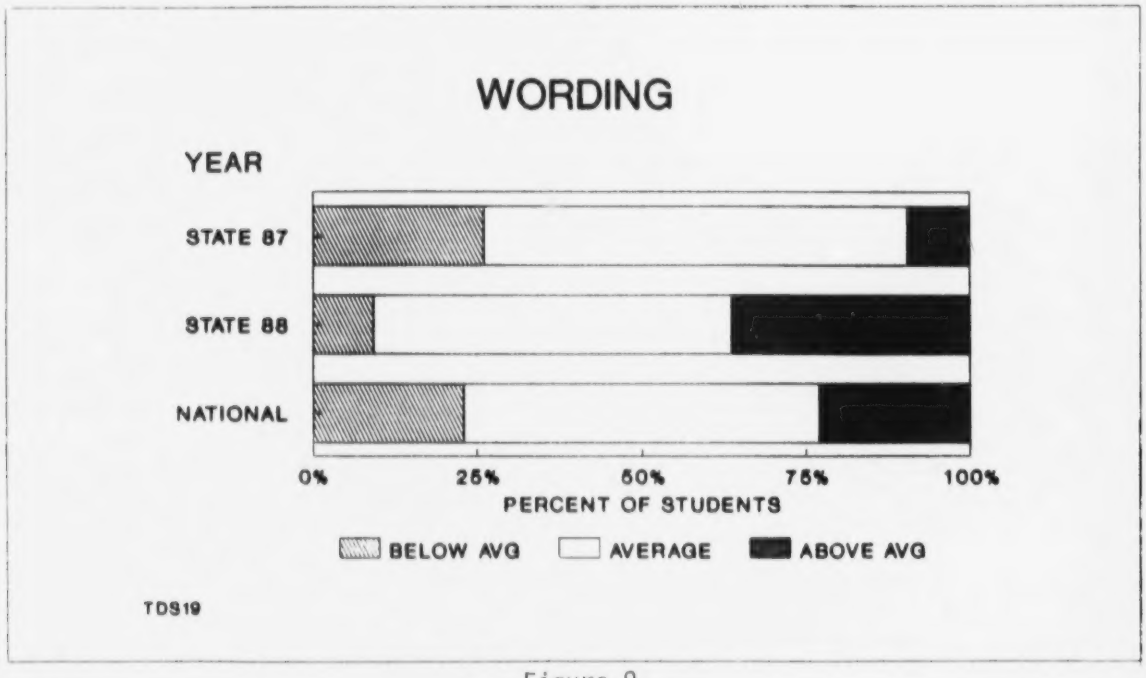


Figure 9

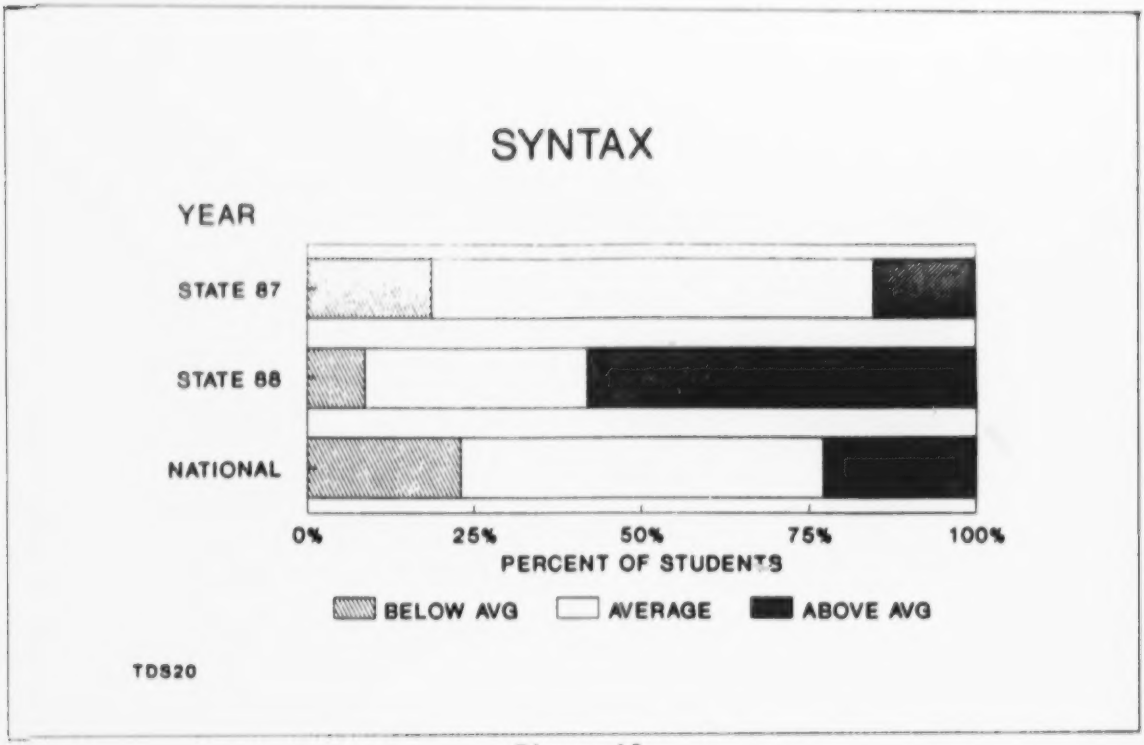

SYNTAX
YEAR
STATE 87
STATE 88
NATIONAL
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%
PERCENT OF STUDENTS
BELOW AVG
AVERAGE
ABOVE AVG
TDS20

Figure 10

B. Grade 6 Stanine Distributions

For the 1987 administration, the writing category was DESCRIBING. The topic was: "Describe your favorite place to go, with a friend."

For the 1988 administration, the writing category was NARRATING. The topic was: "Think about the most frightening or exciting moment that happened to you. Tell what happened."

Figure 11 displays the percentages for the stanine distributions for 1987 and 1988. Figures 12 to 16 provide a graphic display of the same percentages for the five dimensions.

Dimension	Year	Below Av. (1, 2, 3)	Average (4, 5, 6)	Above Average (7, 8, 9)
General Merit	1987	54%	34%	12%
	1988	14%	60%	26%
Ideas	1987	55%	33%	12%
	1988	16%	60%	24%
Organization	1987	35%	56%	9%
	1988	18%	60%	22%
Wording	1987	29%	61%	10%
	1988	21%	59%	20%
Syntax	1987	34%	56%	10%
	1988	20%	63%	17%
Average	1987	41%	48%	11%
	1988	18%	60%	22%
National Norms		23%	54%	23%

Figure 11

1. General Merit

The comparison of the 1987 and 1988 test results of grade six students show that they made striking improvement in the General Merit dimension--a 30% improvement in the below average stanines (better by 9% as compared to the national norm).

There was an increase of 14% in the above average stanines (better by 3% as compared to the national norm).

The combined average and above average percentage was 46% for the first year (31% lower than the national norm of 77%) and 86% for the second year to surpass the national norm by nine percentage points.

2. Other Dimensions

The upward trend of the General Merit scores is reflected in all the other dimensions. Noteworthy improvement was made by grade six students in the lower stanines in all the other dimensions, which decreased the percentages in the below average group--ranging from as much as 39% in Ideas to 8% in Wording--and which enabled the 1988 percentages for all the dimensions to better the national norm.

The gains in the above average group were steady, from 13% in Organization to 7% in Syntax. Except for Syntax at 17%, the 1988 percentages in the four dimensions were close to or better than the national norm.

The combined average and above average percentages for 1988 was 84% for Ideas, 82% for Organization, 80% for Syntax, and 79% for Wording, all exceeding the national norm of 77%.

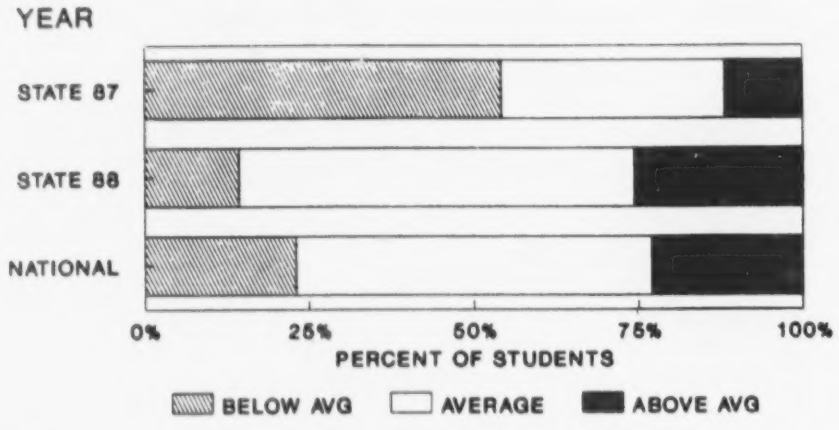
3. Average Percentages

The gains made by grade six students from 1987 to 1988 were attributed largely to students in the below average group achieving better scores to boost the average group (a decrease of 23% in the below average group), and also to an 11% increase of students in the above average group. The averages for all stanine groups were closer to the national norms in 1988 than in 1987.

The total percentages for the average and above average groups were 59% in 1987 and 82% the next year, a 23% increase to better the national norm by five percentage points.

Where General Merit and Ideas were the weakest areas in 1987, the reverse is true in 1988. Syntax now appears to be slightly weaker than the other dimensions.

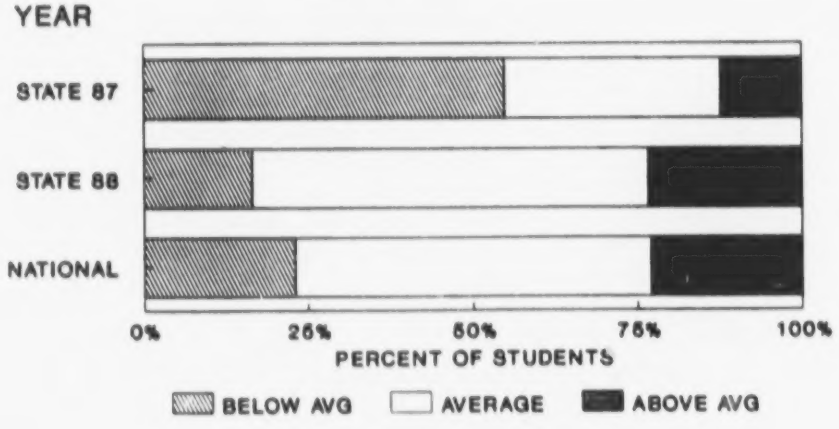
WRITING RESULTS
GRADE 6
GENERAL MERIT



TDS11

Figure 12

IDEAS



TDS12

Figure 13

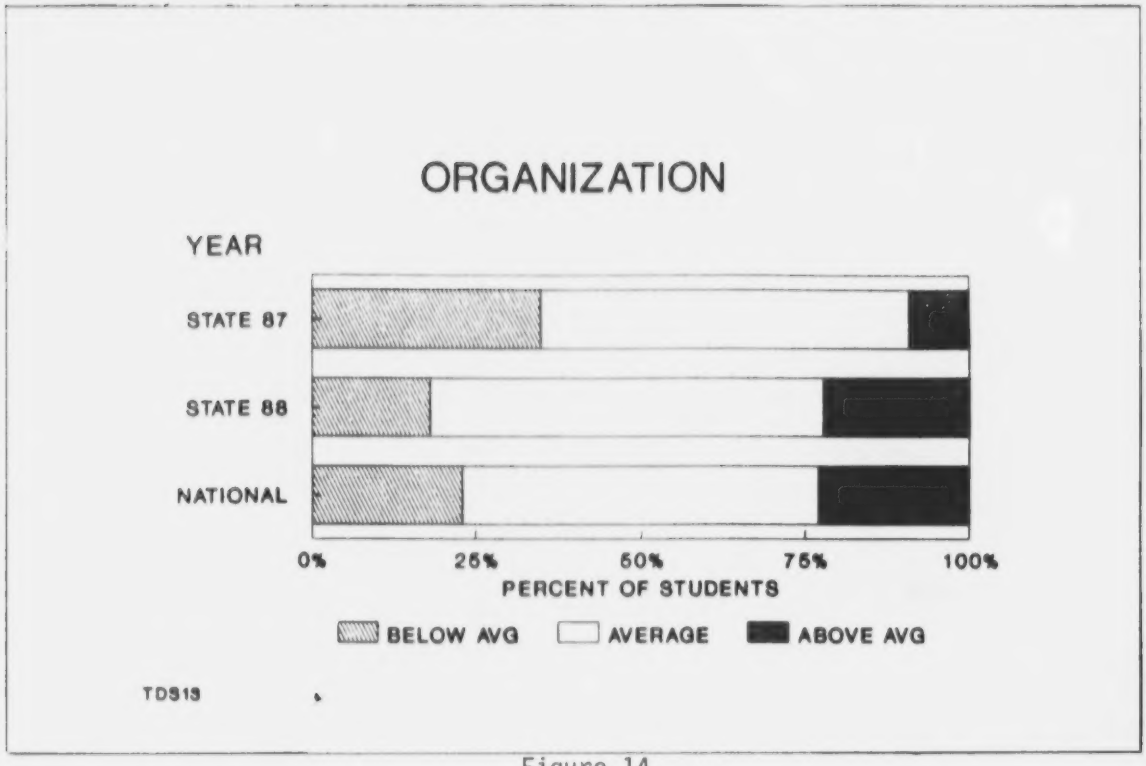


Figure 14

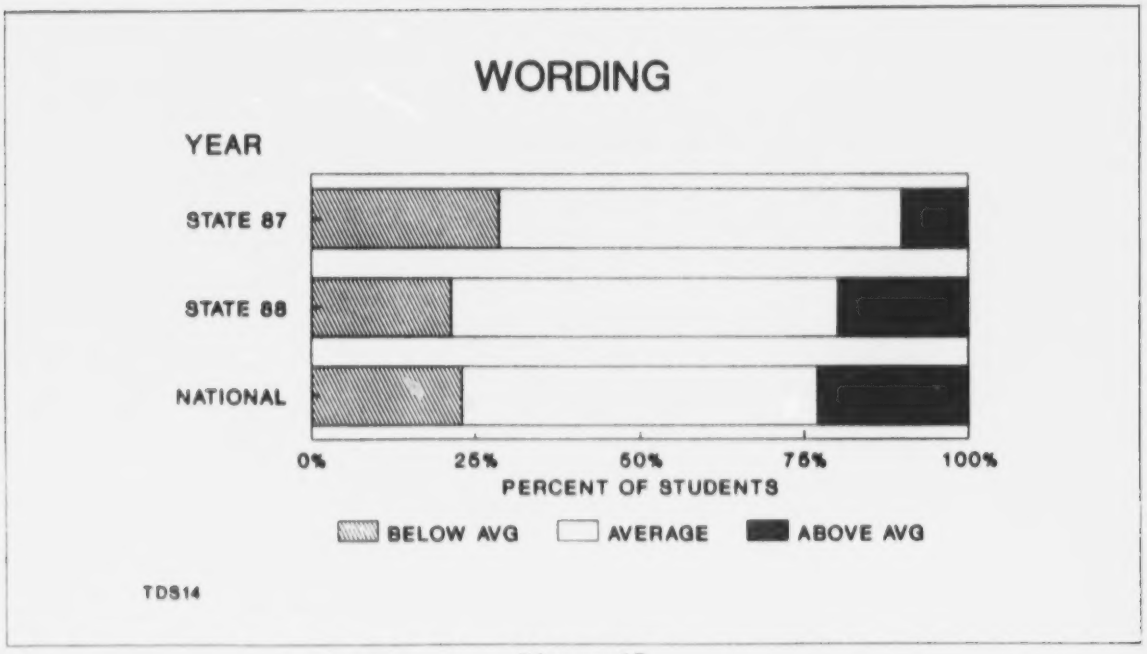


Figure 15

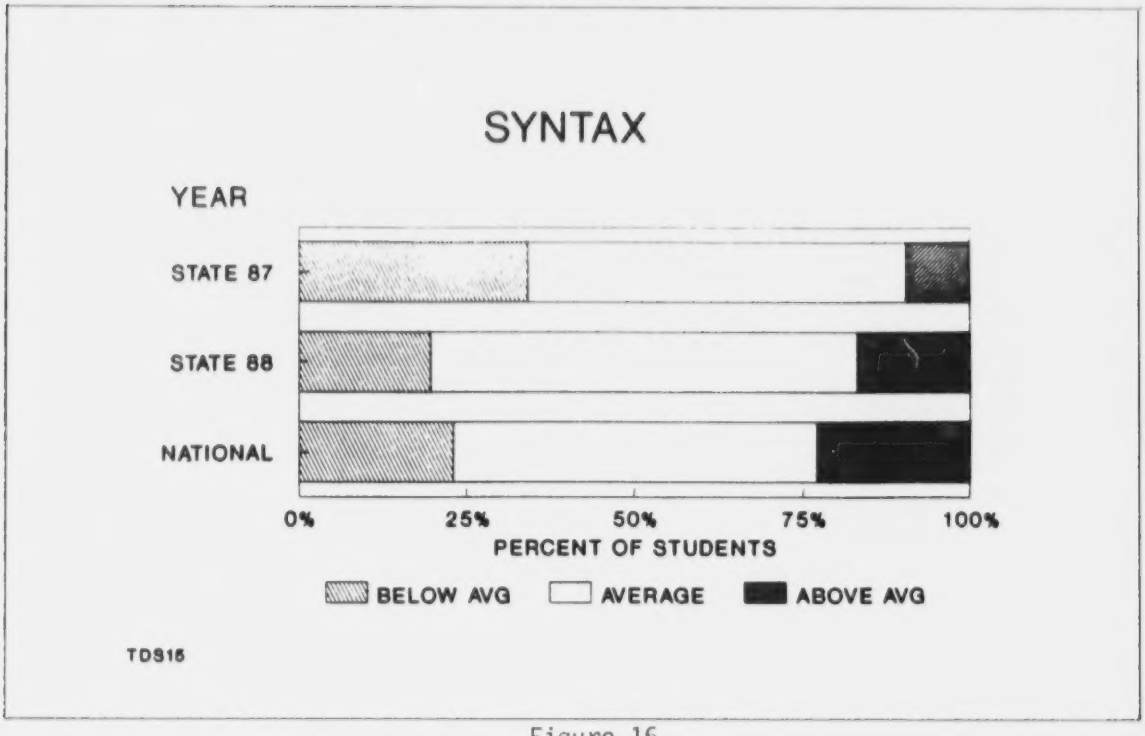

SYNTAX
YEAR
STATE 87
STATE 88
NATIONAL
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%
PERCENT OF STUDENTS
BELOW AVG
AVERAGE
ABOVE AVG
TDS15

Figure 16

C. Grade 8 Stanine Distributions

For the 1987 administration, the writing category was DESCRIBING. The topic was: "Describe a room in your house."

For the 1988 administration, the writing category was NARRATING. The topic was: "Think about the funniest or most embarrassing incident that happened to you. Tell what happened."

Figure 17 displays the percentages for the stanine distributions for 1987 and 1988. Figures 18 to 22 provide a graphic display of the same percentages for the five dimensions.

Dimension	Year	Below Av. (1, 2, 3)	Average (4, 5, 6)	Above Average (7, 8, 9)
General Merit	1987	37%	53%	10%
	1988	12%	74%	14%
Ideas	1987	35%	54%	11%
	1988	13%	74%	13%
Organization	1987	45%	47%	8%
	1988	13%	75%	12%
Wording	1987	43%	49%	8%
	1988	16%	64%	20%
Syntax	1987	22%	64%	14%
	1988	20%	60%	20%
Average	1987	37%	53%	10%
	1988	15%	69%	16%
National Norms		23%	54%	23%

Figure 17

1. General Merit

   Grade eight students made considerable gains in the General Merit dimension from the 1987 to the 1988 administrations--a 25% improvement in the below average stanine group (better by 11% as compared to the national norm) and a slight increase of 4% in the above average group. However, the percent of students in the above average group for 1988 is still below the national norm by nine percentage points.

The total percentages for the average and above average groups were 63% in 1987 and 88% in 1988 for an increase of 25 percentage points (better by 11% as compared to the national norm of 77%).

The greatest movement of students was from the below average to the average group.

2. Other Dimensions

All the other dimensions also showed an improvement in the below average group, particularly Organization and Wording (32% and 27% less students respectively in 1988), which were the weakest areas in 1987. Syntax which was already at the national norm made only a slight 2% improvement.

Although some increases were made in the above average percentages, especially in Wording (12%), the 1988 percentages in all dimensions remain below the national norm.

The combined average and above average percentages in 1988 were 80% for Syntax, 84% for Wording, and 87% for Ideas and Organization as compared to the national norm of 77%.

3. Average Percentages

The gains made by the grade eight students between 1987 and 1988 were similar to those of grade six students. Twenty-two percent less students were in the below average group and 6% more were in the above average group. However, the 1988 percentage of 16% in the above average group continues to fall short of the national norm of 23%, a reflection of the still low percentage of students in the above average group in all five dimensions.

The combined average and above average percentages improved from 63% in 1987 to 85% in 1988 for a 22% increase, bettering the 77% norm by 8%.

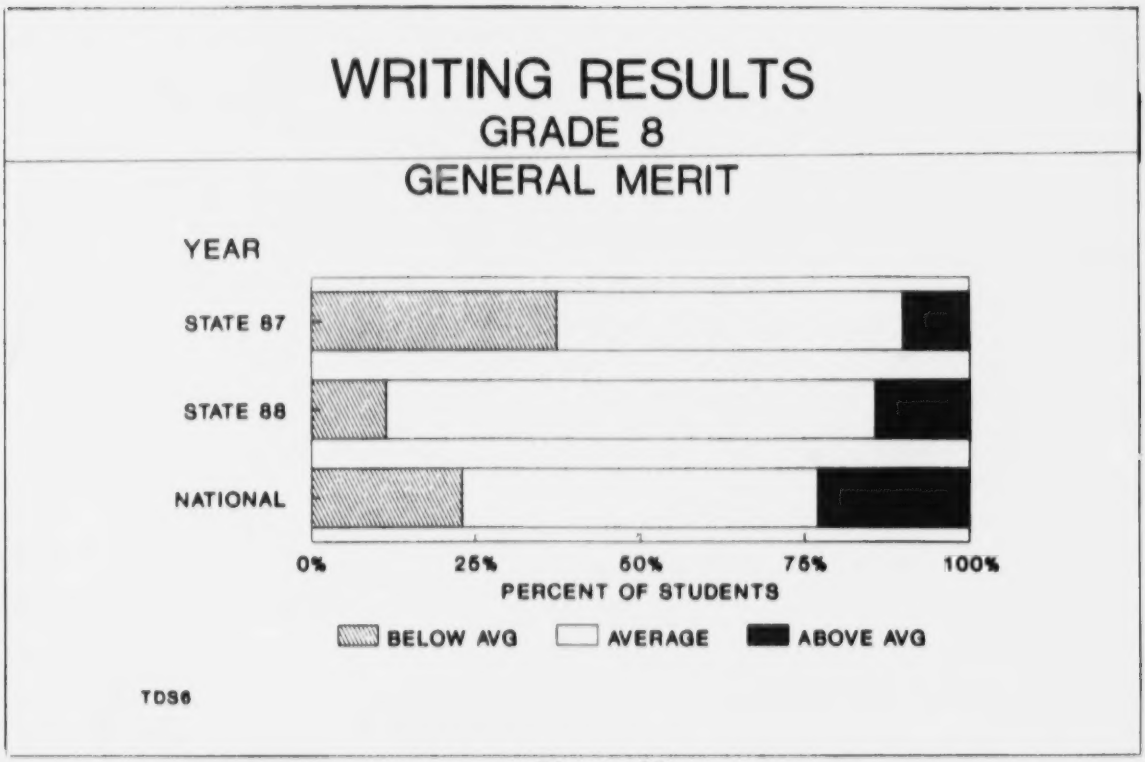


Figure 18

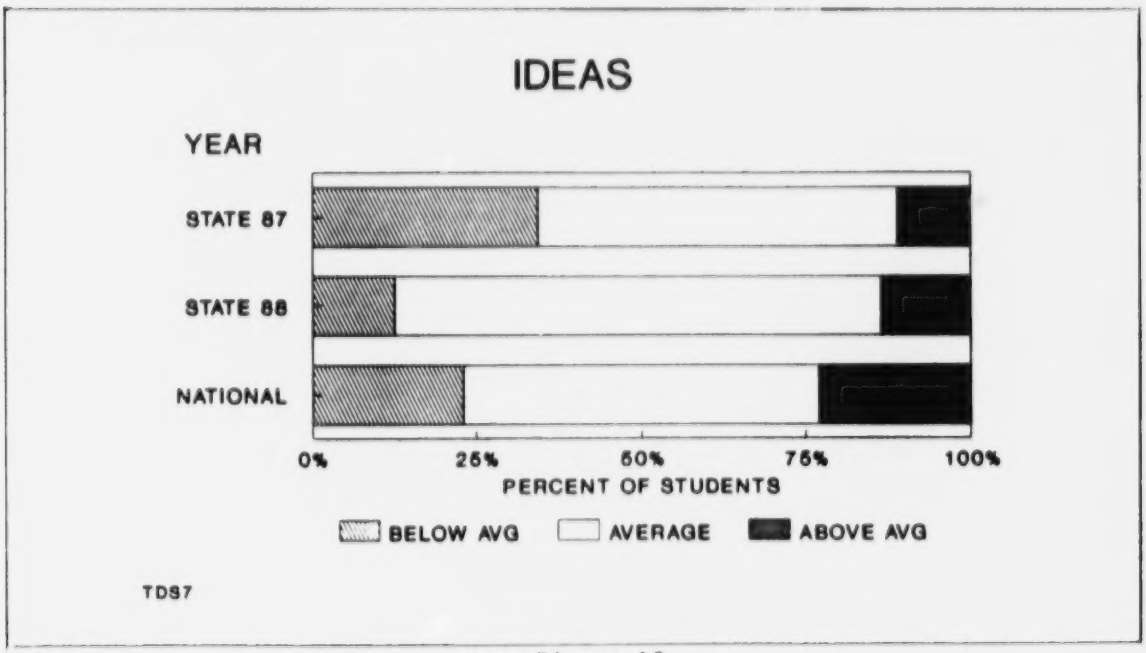


Figure 19

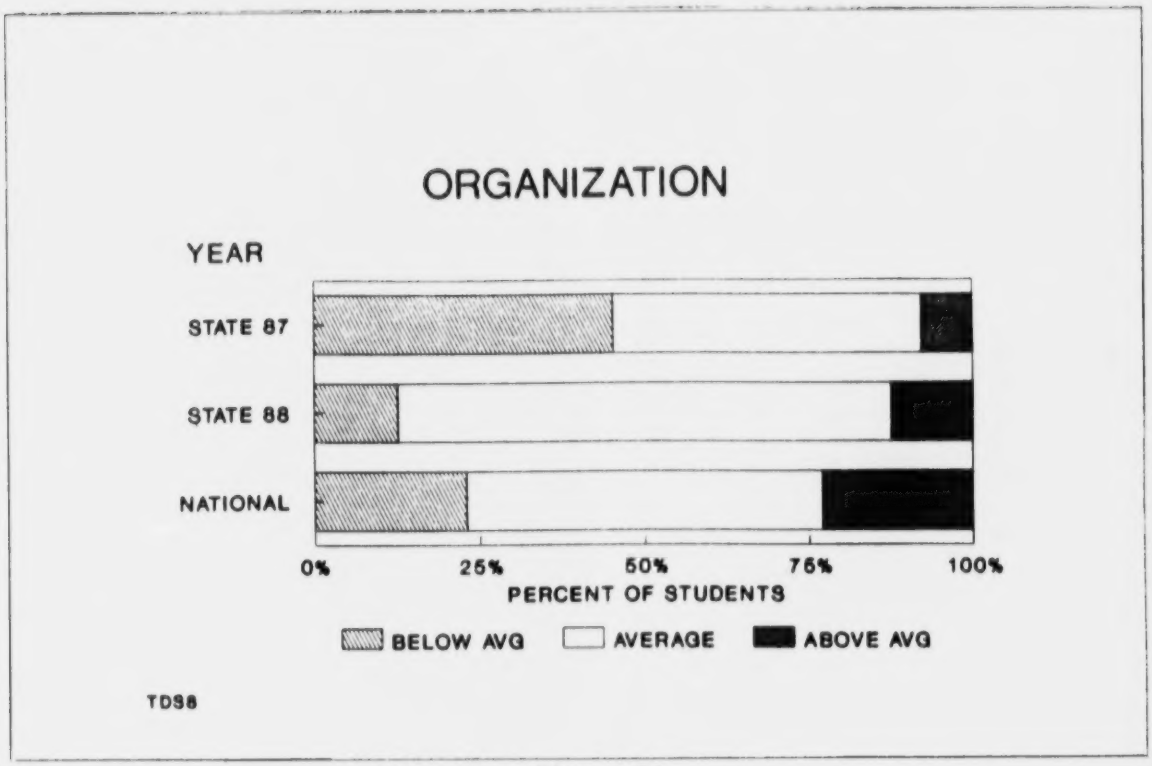


Figure 20

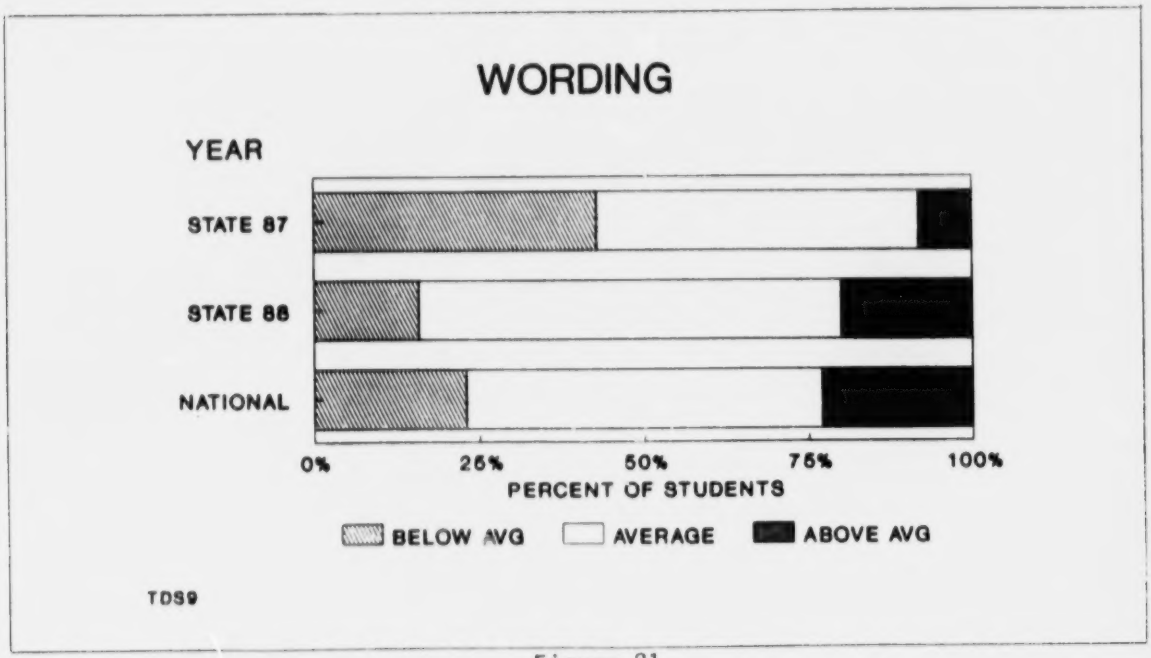


Figure 21

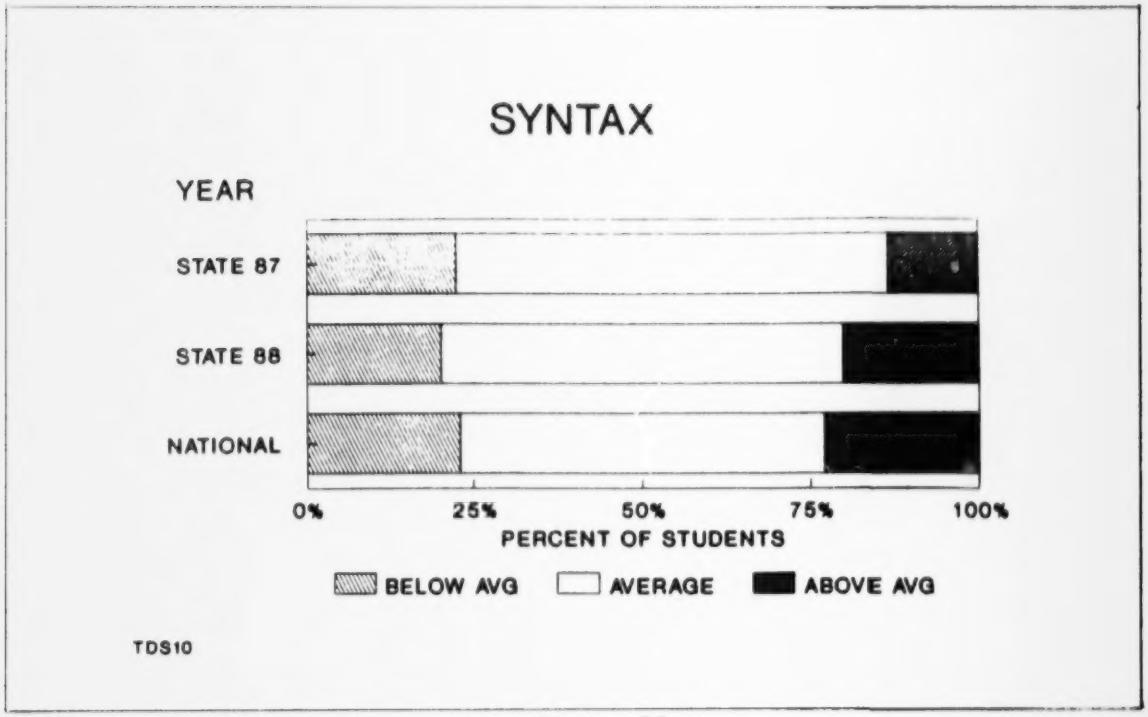

SYNTAX
YEAR
STATE 87
STATE 88
NATIONAL
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%
PERCENT OF STUDENTS
BELOW AVG
AVERAGE
ABOVE AVG
TDS10

Figure 22

D. Grade 10 Stanine Distributions

For the 1987 test administration, the writing category was DESCRIBING. The topic was: "Describe your favorite classroom."

For the 1988 test administration, the writing category was EXPLAINING. The topic was: "Think about the most enjoyable or frustrating incident that happened to you. Tell what happened."

Figure 23 displays the percentages for the stanine distributions for 1987 and 1988. Figures 24-28 provide a graphic display of the same percentages for the five dimensions.

Dimension	Year	Below Av. (1, 2, 3)	Average (4, 5, 6)	Above Average (7, 8, 9)
General Merit	1987	65%	27%	8%
	1988	34%	56%	10%
Ideas	1987	66%	26%	8%
	1988	50%	40%	10%
Organization	1987	58%	35%	7%
	1988	59%	33%	8%
Wording	1987	57%	36%	7%
	1988	47%	40%	13%
Syntax	1987	59%	33%	8%
	1988	47%	47%	6%
Average	1987	61%	32%	7%
	1988	48%	43%	9%
National Norms		23%	54%	23%

Figure 23

1. General Merit

Although the 1987-88 assessment results show that grade ten students made gains in the General Merit dimension, the stanine distributions still do not meet national norms. In 1987, 65% of the students were in the below average stanines; the following year the percentage decreased to thirty-four, a decrease of 31% which is indicative of improvements made by nearly half of the below average tenth graders. However, there are still eleven percent more students in the below average stanines as compared to the national norm of 23%.

The 1988 percentage of students in the above average stanines increased by 2% but is still 13% less than the national norm.

The combined percentage for the average and above average stanines was 35% in 1987 and 66% in 1988, an increase of 31%, but still eleven percentage points below the national norm of 77%.

2. Other Dimensions

The percentage of students in the below average group in all the other dimensions still do not meet the national norm by 27% for Ideas, 36% for Organization, and 24% for Wording and Syntax. Furthermore, Organization stands out as being the only dimension in which no improvement was made.

In the other dimensions, the above average group made very few gains or lost percentage points (Syntax). In all the dimensions, the percent of the above average group was ten to seventeen points less than the norm.

The combined 1988 average and above average percentages are: 41% for Organization, 50% for Ideas, and 53% for Wording and Syntax. Conversely, this means that approximately half of grade ten students are in the below average group.

3. Average Percentages

The average percentage for the below average group reflects an improvement of 13% from 61% in 1987 to 48% in 1988, but the 48% of students still in the below average group more than doubles the national norm of 23%.

On the other end of the scale, the above average percentage remained about the same, below the norm by 14%. With almost half of the grade ten students still in the below average group, the combined average and above average percentage of 52% in 1988 (up from 39% in 1987) falls far short of meeting the 77% national norm--by twenty five percentage points.

It is apparent that Hawaii's tenth graders scored considerably lower than students assessed nationwide in every dimension. In 1988 they did not compare favorably with the national percentages, most particularly in Organization but also in Ideas, Wording, and Syntax.

There is also a considerable gap between grade 10 and grade 3, 6, and 8 students. Further analysis of all pertinent data should be made to determine the factors that are affecting the writing assessment results.

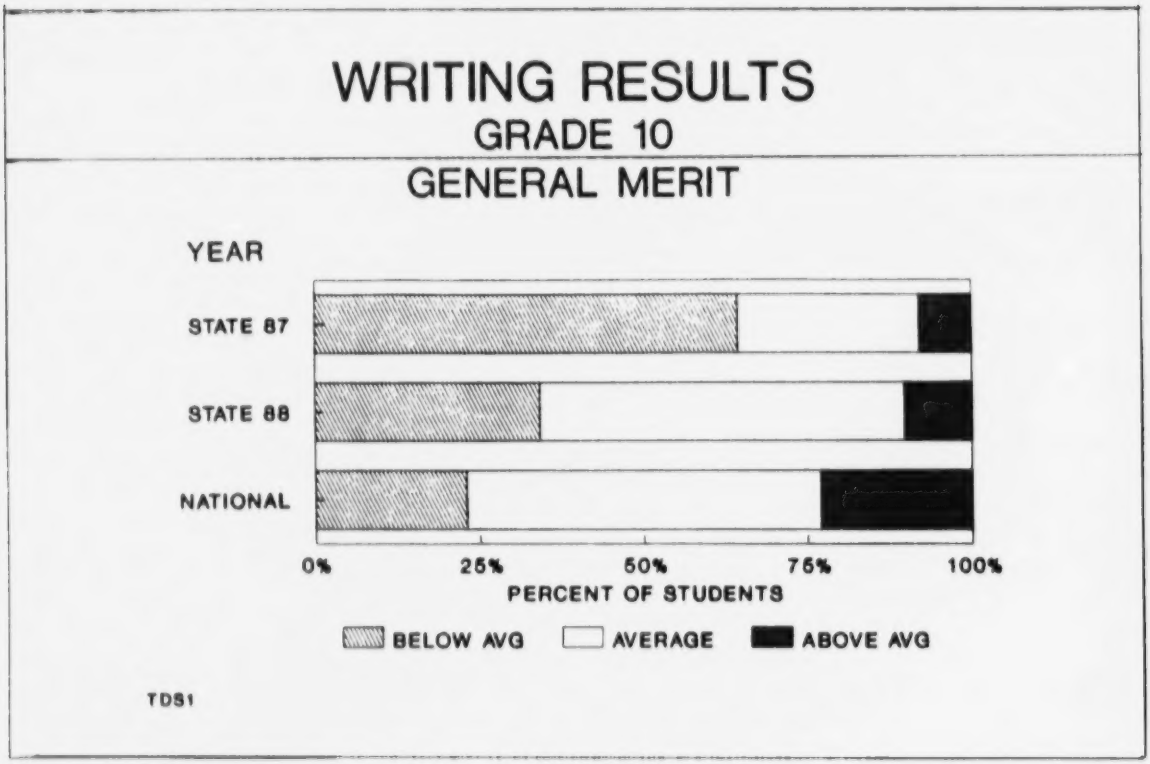
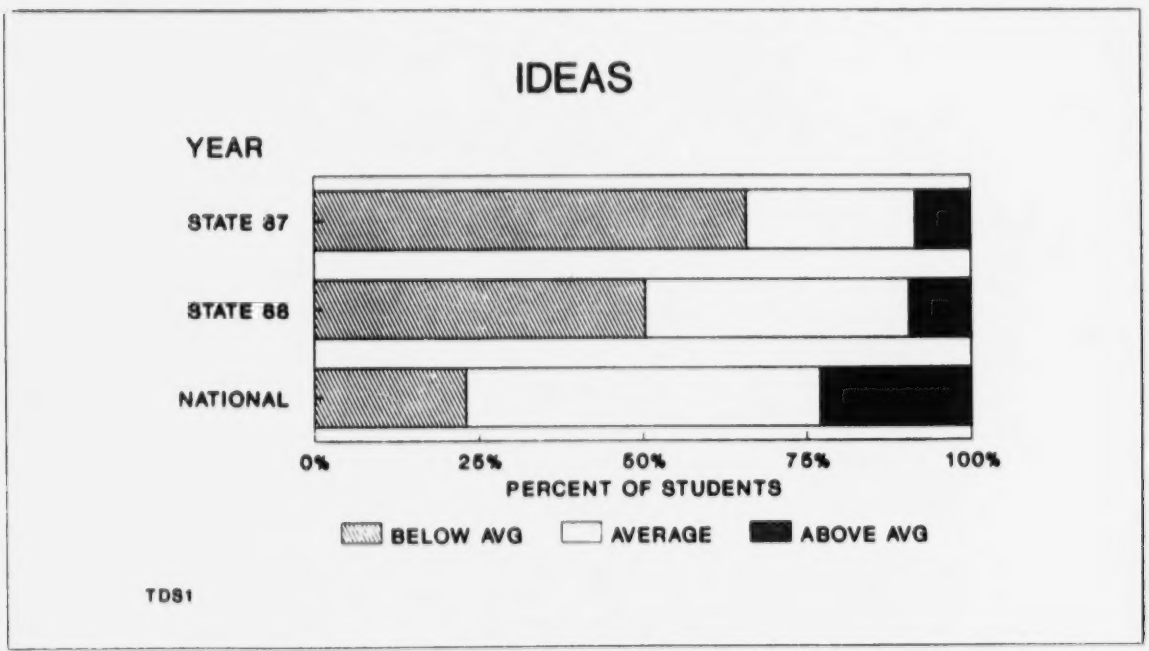


Figure 24



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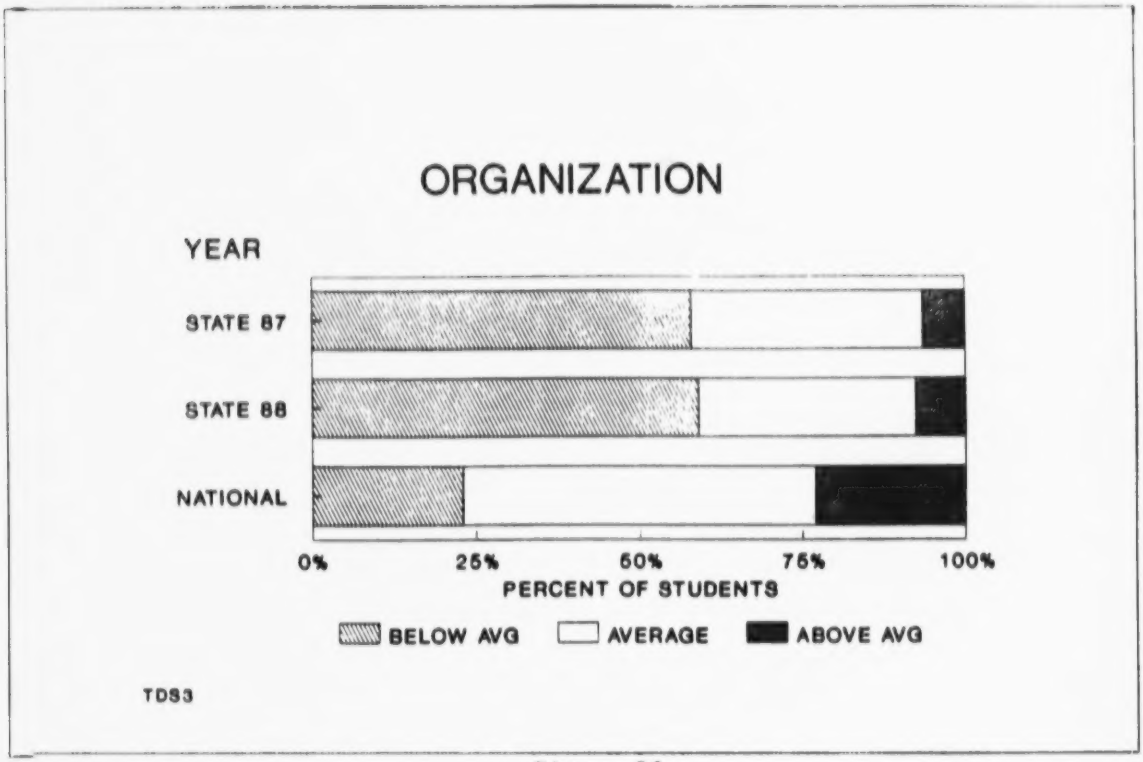

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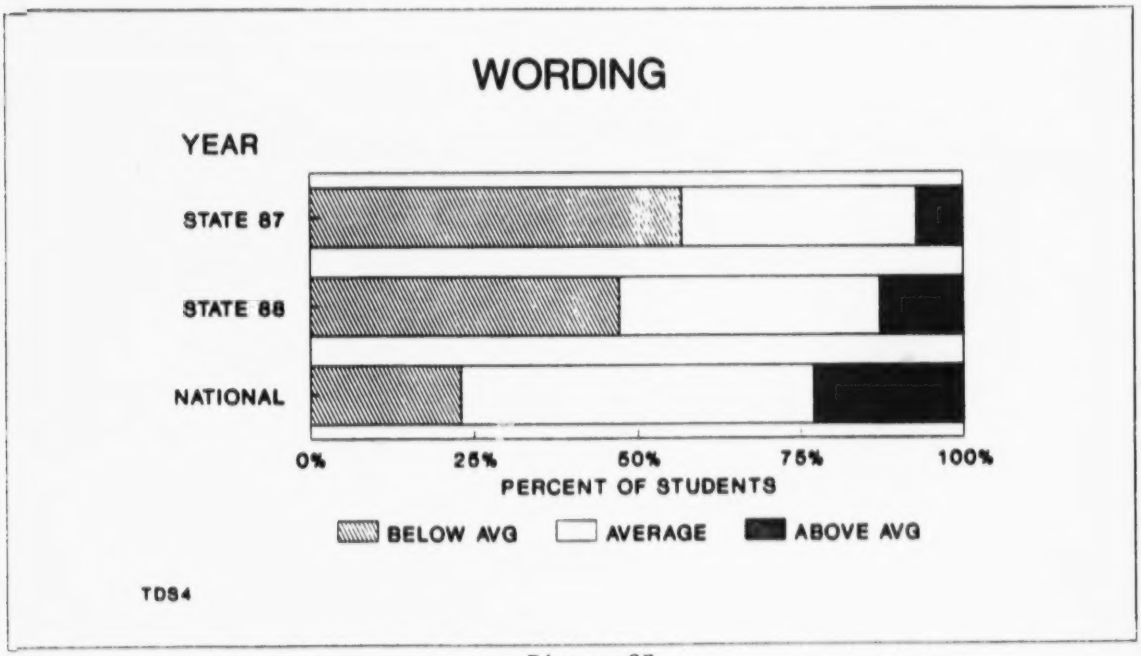
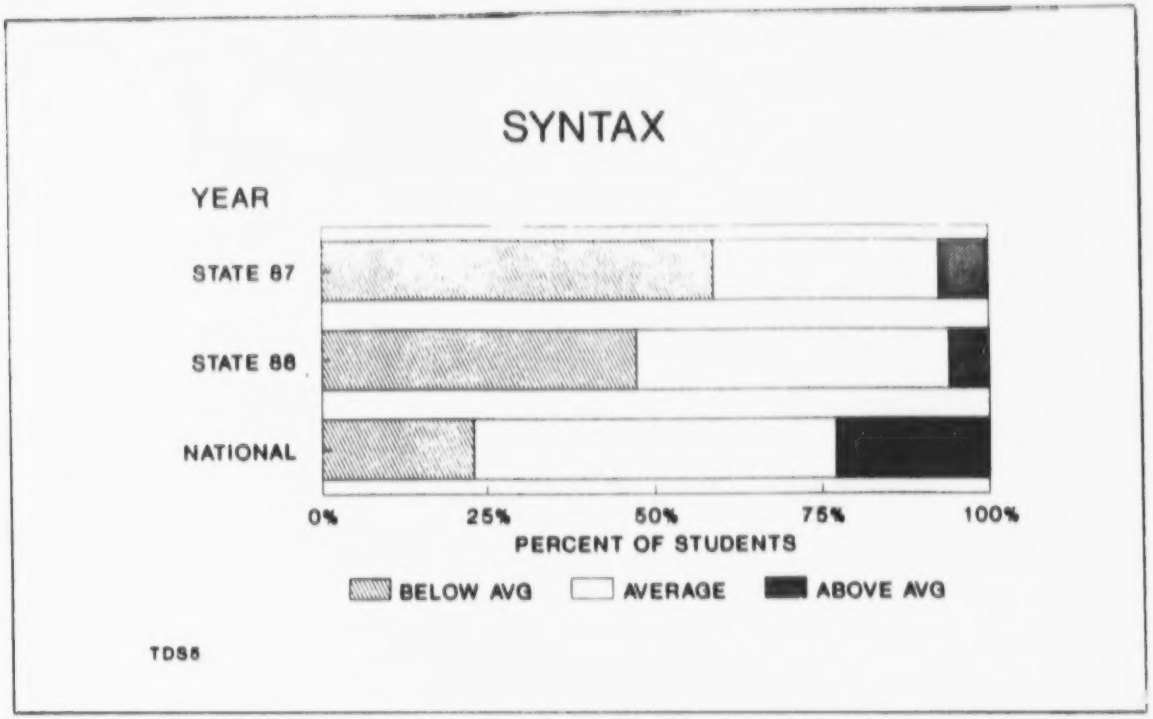


Figure 27


SYNTAX
YEAR
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NATIONAL
0%
25%
50%
75%
100%
PERCENT OF STUDENTS
BELOW AVG
AVERAGE
ABOVE AVG
TDS6

Figure 28

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

The performance of Hawaii's students in 1988 shows an improvement over that of the previous year. Students in grade three have stanine scores that are above national norms for all dimensions. Students in grades six and eight are performing at about the same level as the national norm. Students in grade ten made some gains but are still from one to one-and-a-half stanines below the national norm.

No conclusions on whether students perform better in any one category of writing can be drawn from the assessment because the same students are not tested in all four categories in the same year. Among the five dimensions--General Merit, Ideas, Organization, Wording, and Syntactic Structure--performance was fairly even implying that students are receiving instruction in all areas. Writing conventions per se was not rated although it did have a bearing in the General Merit and Syntactic Structure scores.

The results of the Stanford Writing Assessment should be used in conjunction with other measures because of the limited and subjective nature of the instrument. It assesses only a small part of the total writing curriculum and one draft is not enough of a sample on which to make broad judgments. The implication is that there is a need to look at additional data to take into account the variables discussed in Section I. Data such as the correlation of reading and writing scores, longitudinal scores (how the same student performs over the years), and specific, detailed scores need to be analyzed. Examples of the last are data on students who did not pass (those who scored in stanines 1 and 2), or specific district and school data by year (category) and by dimension.

Data from a variety of other assessment instruments should also be used to get information about students' writing. Among these are observation and consultation logs for individual students, group-written responses to challenging issues, teacher-devised essay tests, papers on student-selected research topics, and journals and learning logs. An on-going writing portfolio with a dated record and selected samples of writing might be kept for each student for information on student progress and learning needs over a period of time.

The improvement in students' writing is evidence that districts, schools, and teachers are placing a greater emphasis on writing instruction. A systematic assessment and improvement process is being used to analyze related experiential, behavioral, and academic data to determine strengths and weaknesses, establish priorities, and develop improvement plans. Teachers are giving students more opportunities to write longer pieces in a variety of areas and for different purposes. They are more cognizant of the process approach to writing and writing across the curriculum, which are the foci of many improvement efforts such as the Office of Instructional Services school improvement project, Basic Academic Skills Improvement through Core Subjects (BASICS).

B. Recommendations

The recommendations below are made to address the implications that stem from the analysis of student performance as well as from the nature of the assessment and the scoring process. They are submitted here for state, districts, schools, and teachers to consider as they work for continued improvement in writing.

The first general recommendation for any improvement effort is that it begin with a re-examination of the theoretical framework; all concerned must determine the beliefs about language and writing that will form the basis for their goals and objectives, curriculum planning, and instruction. The Language Arts Program Guide, 1989, should be a helpful reference. Another general recommendation is that the improvement effort should be part of a systematic, schoolwide process.

The specific recommendations below are categorized under the following headings: 1) instruction; 2) staff development; 3) support for writing; and 4) administration, scoring, and analysis.

1. Instruction

- Establish an atmosphere that is conducive to writing and the development of positive attitudes towards writing and self-confidence as writers. This is important at all levels, but should receive special attention in the intermediate and high schools.
- Develop a schoolwide curriculum that addresses writing across the curriculum. Writing should be encouraged and assigned by every teacher, not just the English teacher and not just the grade 3, 6, 8, and 10 teachers.
- Continue to teach the prewriting, writing, and postwriting stages of the writing process. However, according to The Writing Report Card, 1986, the process should not only be taught, it should be taught systematically and strategically so students can understand and internalize it and self-monitor and manage it effectively.

- Continue to provide time to compose more and longer pieces for a variety of purposes, functions, audiences, and forms, including letter writing and other types of writing commonly used in real life. Provide a wide range and balance of writing experiences that include, but are not limited to, the category to be assessed.

- Continue to put primary emphasis and value on ideas, fluency, and expressiveness. Teach the writing conventions purposefully in relation to the students' writing during the writing process.

- Provide many broad-based experiences in which writing, reading, and oral communication are integrated. Research clearly indicates the close relationship between reading proficiency and writing achievement. Wide reading of well-written materials leads to better writing.

- Focus on the development of thinking skills as students write. Explicitly teach students strategies that will help them formulate and clarify ideas, organize them effectively, and communicate them articulately. Engage students in activities that challenge them to think logically, relate the graphic organizers used in reading comprehension to writing, and employ and stretch their abilities in expressing themselves.

- Provide time for conferences/consultations with each student and interaction among students as they write. Provide opportunities to share their writing.

2. Staff Development

- Examine own attitudes and perceptions about writing; develop own writing skills and model and share your writing with students.

- Become familiar with scoring rubrics and the scoring procedure. Learn the elements of good writing to be able to develop own rubrics and prompts.

3. Support for Writing

- Identify standards of an effective writing program.

- Involve the home and community in the school's improvement efforts. Inform parents about the school's writing program and what they can do at home to support the program. Encourage more reading and writing at home.

- Make use of library and media services, typewriters and computers, and other resources.

- Participate in the language arts activities of the University of Hawaii and those of other agencies or professional organizations.

4. Administration, Scoring, and Analysis

- Evaluate the quality of prompts to ensure consistency with the intent of the assessment and scoring rubrics. They should also be challenging and interesting to students and appropriate for the grade level.
- Evaluate the rubrics for consistency, clarity, and sequence.
- Evaluate the scoring process. Strengthen the training of the scorers and clearly establish inter-rater reliability, intra- and inter-grade.
- Conduct a longitudinal study of Stanford Writing Assessment results.
- Compare reading and writing data.

IV. APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Scoring Rubrics

TASK EXPECTATIONS: GRADE 3

DESCRIBING

In Describing, students are asked to: 1) visualize the given topic, 2) identify its salient features and decide what to include, what not to include, 3) organize this information in some clear order, and 4) find the words and structures to present this picture to the reader. The steps of this process are not necessarily sequential; there is a constant going back and forth as the writer responds to internal questions, such as: What is it like? Is that the word for what it's like? Is this better here or at the end? And so on.

Of the four kinds of writing in the Assessment, Describing is probably the least complex. Details tend to be relatively static, and there is considerable leeway possible in the selection of details and their organization. Given the kinds of topics suggested for this level, spatial sequence is probably the natural order of organization, although others are also possible, as well as combinations.

Third graders are only beginning to express themselves on paper, and many are ignorant of the basic conventions of writing. Even Superior writers are uneven in their grasp of skills, producing graceful structures at one point and stumbling at the next. In Describing, third graders are handicapped by two main problems: 1) an inability to organize well, with details grouped appropriately, and 2) an inability to recognize clearly the relevance of particular details to the description. They are not always aware that what seems important to them may not be so to the description the reader has to re-create through words; they are more involved in their own point of view than in trying to create a picture for the reader. Overall the impression of third grade writing is that there is a great deal more thought power than can yet be expressed in writing.

Grade 3: Describing

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
GENERAL MERIT: Does the paper as a whole give the reader a clear picture?	The paper fails to meet the task requirements in more ways than one. It may be far short of adequate on detail, contain too many distractions, be off the subject, or give an impression of great immaturity.	The paper is adequate, suffers from no major faults, but it is not outstanding either as a whole or in any particular dimension. The picture conveyed may not be clear in focus because it is short on detail or obscured by irrelevant detail. The wording may be correct but on the dull side.	The writer has conveyed a clear, interesting, and sometimes vivid picture of the subject. The details are sufficient in number and concrete so the picture is clear. The whole hangs together and reads smoothly.
IDEAS: Are they clear, sufficient in number, significant, and relevant?	The Poor paper has few ideas, too many distracting ones. The writer is unable to distinguish between what is important to himself/herself and what is important to the reader in re-creating the picture.	The paper may be short of enough details to provide a clear picture, or it may have a surfeit because unimportant or irrelevant details have been included. The writer is clearly not as skilled as the Superior student in picking out the details that may be most interesting or striking in presenting the picture in mind.	The details are ample in number and significant to the topic. They are concrete, appealing to the senses--visual mostly, but sometimes appealing to sound, touch, or smell. Occasionally an additional detail or two is included--personal feelings, a bit of family history, or other--which imparts a pleasing touch to the description.
ORGANIZATION: Are the ideas presented in an orderly way?	There is usually not enough to organize, or if there is enough detail, very little or no discernible organization is present.	The organization is adequate in that it is systematic, but it smacks a little (or more) of an inventory, a somewhat perfunctory listing of details. This may be partly the result of the writer's inability to distinguish between the really significant or striking and the less significant or striking details. The point of view is generally consistent, and transitions when present, are adequate.	The ideas are presented in a way that makes the reader's re-creation of the picture quite effortless. The order is usually spatial (exterior to interior, front to back, near to far, etc.) but it is sometimes combined with other orders (most striking detail in a room, for example). The point of view is consistent, so that the reader is never confused as to how the picture is seen. The transitions from one group of details to the next are smooth.
WORDING: Is wording appropriate, graphic?	The wording is immature, often inexact and sloppy.	Wording is correct and suitable but bland and bordering on the tedious. There is a tendency to repetition of some words and phrases, as if the writer had no other way of expressing a similar thought. Little or nothing lifts the writing above the most ordinary.	The wording is precise, lively, sometimes vivid, with an occasional attempt to use a figure of speech.
SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE: Are the sentences smooth, efficient, varied, and interesting? Does the whole flow well?	The Poor paper is largely a stringing together of very short simple sentences by coordinate conjunctions. Very often the ideas joined together have little or no relation to each other. The style is choppy because of the preponderance of short simple sentences.	The paper contains no major syntactic errors, but it displays no outstanding competencies either. There are fewer complex constructions and adjectival and adverbial phrases than in the Superior paper and more repetition of similar structures.	Syntactic structure may be conventional or unconventional, occasionally quite individualistic, and sometimes a bit awkward and tending to repetition, but it is evident the writer is well on the way to syntactic mastery. There may not be many complex sentences to show subordination of lesser ideas and even fewer reductions to achieve efficiency and economy, but this lack is offset by a nice balance of long and short sentences and variety in sentence beginnings. Transitions are smooth, and the whole reads well.

TASK EXPECTATIONS: GRADE 6

DESCRIBING

Describing is probably the least complex of the four writing tasks of the Assessment. The topics are such that students can easily draw on firsthand knowledge; and the details or characteristics tend to be static, both in themselves and in their relationship to one another. Moreover, the writer has considerable leeway in choosing and arranging the details, especially since the point of view is personal.

Once the topic is chosen or assigned, the student has to: 1) visualize the thing to be described and identify the distinguishing characteristics; 2) sort out the details and decide what to include, what not to; 3) organize the details in some natural or logical order; and 4) find the words and structures to present the picture to the reader. Throughout, the writer must maintain a consistent point of view. The whole process is not necessarily sequential; there is a constant going back and forth as the writing proceeds.

Most sixth graders should be able to meet the requirements of describing something familiar without difficulty. Their writing in the Assessment reflects the mental maturation of this age group, a considerable advance over the writing of younger groups. Most of them display the ability to distance themselves from what they are writing in order to view the subject as a whole; and they are aware of the separate existence of others. The combination of these two characteristics results in writing that is well organized and contains significant information for the reader. Awareness of audience, which depends on maturity and which begins to emerge in the preteens, is evident in the courtesies directed to the reader. In various ways the writer shows an understanding that some formality is called for in writing. For example, the writer of the Superior sample (Program Guide, page 18), in addition to giving interesting information that goes beyond mere visual description, welcomes the reader, provides an orientation, voices concern over the reader's comfort, and at the end expresses thanks. Although marked improvement over the writing of younger students is most apparent in the Superior paper, the writing of most students at this level seems to progress in the same direction.

Grade 6: Describing

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
GENERAL MERIT: Does the writer give a clear, well-focused, and vivid picture of what is being described?	The Poor paper fails to meet the task requirements in more than one way. Not only is the description not clear, it is often partly off the subject. A frequent problem is the writer's inability to get outside his or her immediate world sufficiently to realize that it is not known to everyone. The writer assumes otherwise and thus provides little or no detail.	The Average paper is adequate but not outstanding in any particular aspect. Character weaknesses include a failure to achieve sufficient distance from the subject to give the reader a complete picture; and an organization which in general seems satisfactory but which fails to achieve better groupings of details that would result in a clear picture for the reader.	If the answer is "yes," the paper merits a Superior rating. It has a great deal to say, it is well organized, it has flashes of vivid expression, and it reveals an awarenes of audience--that is, that there is a reader to be considered in the writing. While the first three qualities would be expected in the work of effective younger writers, it is not until grade six that the last feature appears with any degree of frequency.
IDEAS: Are they sufficient in number and in significance and relevance to the subject, and are they clear? In describing a place, the writer's ideas might include physical details that appeal to any of the senses; 1) visual--light, color, size, distance, height, space, perspective; 2) sound--pitch, volume, texture; 3) touch--heat, cold, dampness, weight, pressure, texture; 4) smell--aromatic, nauseous, offensive, and even 5) taste--salt, sweet, sour, bitter, bland, and so on. In addition to physical details, ideas might include impressions, feelings, memories, and other information of historical, architectural, environmental, personal, or other interest.	The Poor paper contains few ideas that bear significantly or directly on the subject.	The details are correct and appropriate, but they are quite ordinary and not as concrete or as interesting as in the Superior paper. Sometimes the writer may fall short in the number of details, leaving a sense of incompleteness, a picture not quite filled out to satisfaction. Sometimes there are too many details, indicating the writer's inability to distinguish between important and less important features.	The writer shows a confident control of the kinds of information that are not only important and pertinent to the subject but also interesting. The details are concrete and sufficient so that the reader gets a clear and frequently vivid picture. Appeal is often to more than the visual sense alone, and interesting bits of additional information add to the description.
ORGANIZATION: Are the ideas presented in an orderly and logical way?	There is no discernible organization.	There is a general organization, but it is not carried through to its logical end. It is either incomplete, or it breaks down, or it lacks sufficient ordering of the lesser details to give a clear picture. This failing is seen in the Average sample in the Program Guide, which starts with a description of the exterior of the house, moves in through the front door and into the living room, and stops there. There is no clear subgrouping of details for either the exterior or interior which would give the reader a more orderly picture. In the Average paper the point of view is generally consistent, and transitions though not always smooth are adequate.	The organization is clear and appropriate, and the reader is able to re-create the picture without effort. The order in which the details are presented, whether spatial or by other order (for example, the most striking details first) is maintained so that there is no confusion. Where details are numerous, there is effective subgrouping of details within the larger organization. The writer's point of view whether fixed or moving (as in the Superior sample in the Program Guide), is clear and consistent. Transitions from point to point are smooth.

Grade 6: Describing

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
WORDING: Is wording appropriate, precise, graphic?	The wording is immature, imprecise, and often sloppy, falling back on catchall words or phrases.	The Average vocabulary is correct and appropriate but generally verges on the bland. There is little in the wording that lifts the writing above the ordinary.	A notable feature of good sixth grade descriptive writing is increased depth of vocabulary. The paper Superior in this category contains rich and vivid words appropriate to what is being described.
SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE: Are the sentences smooth, efficient, varied, and interesting? Does the whole flow well?	The sentences are mostly simple and repetitive in structure. The longer sentences are strung out with "ands" and "buts."	Syntax is adequate and generally free of serious errors, but the Average paper falls considerably short of the mastery evident in the Superior paper. The sentences tend to be short and choppy and repetitive in structure. The longer sentences tend to be strung together with coordinate conjunctions. There may be an occasional use of a subordinate clause (beginning a sentence with an adverbial clause is typical of sixth grade performance in the Assessment), but easy control of subordination is not evident throughout the writing. Papers at the lower end of the average range may contain an occasional incomplete sentence, which exhibits not so much a thinking problem as a lack of facility for putting words together into well-organized sentences.	The writer shows a good command of syntax. There is variety in sentence types and beginnings, and a good balance of longer and shorter sentences. The appropriate use of adjectival phrases and clauses in addition to descriptive adjectives adds to the impression of control. Overall the sentences flow smoothly and pleasingly.

TASK EXPECTATIONS: GRADE 8

DESCRIBING

Describing is probably the least complex of the four writing tasks of the Assessment. The topics assigned are such that students can easily draw on firsthand knowledge; and the details or characteristics tend to be static, both in themselves and in their relationships to one another. Moreover, the writer has considerable leeway in choosing and arranging the details, especially since the point of view is personal. The topics are not intended to assess how much the writers know--only how well they present what they know.

In fulfilling the task, the student has to: 1) visualize the subject to be described and identify the salient features; 2) decide what features to include, what to leave out; 3) organize the information in some natural or logical order; and 4) find the best words and structures to present the picture to the reader. These steps are not necessarily sequential; the writer moves back and forth as the writing proceeds, but throughout, a consistent point of view has to be maintained.

Most eighth graders should be able to fulfill these expectations with a good degree of competency, but the papers examined in the test group of the Assessment show little improvement over the writing of younger students. In general polish is lacking. The Average papers continue to be unimaginative, and it appears that the writers will probably not make further progress without guidance in searching out more than the obvious details of their subjects and in organizing them more effectively. Some of the poor writers at this level are unable to match the very ordinary performance of younger average writers.

On the whole eighth grade writers seem to have lost the willingness to share their thoughts with the readers that younger students have. The writers liveliness, the awareness of audience, and even concern for the reader that mark younger writers in the Assessment are lacking at this level.

Grade 8: Describing

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
GENERAL MERIT: Does the writer give a clear, well-focused, and vivid picture of the subject?	A "No" means a Poor paper. The writer was clearly unable to meet the task requirements, and no clear picture emerges because the details are insufficient, irrelevant, poorly stated, and poorly organized.	A mixed response to the question indicates an Average paper. There may be a sufficiency of detail but the details are no more than the most obvious. On the other hand, basic information is often missing so that the picture is blurred. The impression overall is one of adequacy of an ordinary, unimaginative sort.	The paper is Superior if the answer to the question is "Yes." There is ample detail focused clearly on the subject and presented in orderly fashion from a consistent point of view. The choice of words is appropriate, vivid even, and the whole reads well from beginning to end. The overall impression is one of competence in presenting the picture for the reader.
IDEAS: Are they sufficient, clear, significant, and relevant to the subject? In describing a place, the writer's ideas might include physical details that appeal to any of the senses: 1) visual--light, color, size, distance, height, space, perspective; 2) sound--pitch, volume, texture; 3) touch--heat, cold, dampness, weight, pressure, texture; 4) smell--aromatic, nauseous, offensive; and even 5) taste--salt, sweet, sour, bitter, bland, and so on. In addition to physical details, ideas might include impressions, feelings, memories, and other information of historical, architectural, environmental, personal, or other interest. Emotive details combined with physical details can infuse the description with an atmosphere, or mood, that can evoke definite responses from the reader.	The Poor paper contains few ideas that bear directly or significantly on the subject.	The details in the Average paper are usually of the most obvious kind, and they are not as concrete or as interesting as in the Superior paper. Sometimes the writer may fall short of enough information, leaving a sense of incompleteness, of a picture not quite filled out to the reader's satisfaction. Frequently there are too many details, indicating an inability to distinguish between important and less important features.	The writer of the Superior paper shows a confident control of the kinds of information that are important and pertinent to the subject and likely to arouse the reader's interest. The details are concrete and sufficient in number so that the reader gets a clear, complete, and frequently vivid picture. Appeal is often to more than the visual sense alone, and interesting additional information is included.
ORGANIZATION: Are the ideas presented in an orderly and logical way? The organization of the details in a descriptive paper at this level is usually spatial. However, it could be by some other order, such as importance, with the most striking details presented first; or it could reverse that order to build up from the least to the most important. Whatever organization is followed, it must help the reader's orderly re-creation of the picture in the writer's mind. The writer must also maintain a consistent point of view.	The lack of organization makes it difficult for the reader to sort out the details and understand what the writer might have had in mind. There may be some progression, such as indications of time or movement through space, but what the information leads to is not clear. Often there is not enough information to organize.	The paper has a sense of organization--it is at least not chaotic. However, it lacks the clear introduction, the orderly grouping of details, the smooth transitions from group to group, and the firm conclusion of the Superior paper. Overall the organization may be adequate enough but lacking in a clear sense of control.	The introduction clearly points to what is to follow. In some cases the details may lead up to a summarizing statement about the subject. The details are grouped into well-ordered paragraphs with smooth transitions between groupings. The point of view is clear and consistent. The whole paper shows that the writer had in mind the sequence in which the reader's re-creation of the picture was to proceed from beginning to end.

Grade 8: Describing

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
WORDING: Is wording appropriate, precise, graphic?	Wording is imprecise, lackluster, immature, or careless. There is an almost total lack of interest, color, or life in the vocabulary.	Wording is accurate and adequate enough to convey the information, but it is, on the whole, rather matter-of-fact, rather dull and uninteresting. Lacking is a sense of vividness, of a picture brought to life by a choice of significant detail communicated to the reader by variety and richness of language.	Wording is accurate and concrete, conveying the details of sight, sound, or mood in a vivid way. Original figures of speech may be used, nouns are specific rather than general, adjectives are not overused, and verbs are active rather than passive. The language overall is natural and familiar, free of pretension and clichés.
SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE: Are the sentences smooth, efficient, varied, and interesting? Does the whole flow well?	The sentences are mostly simple, short, and repetitive in structure, resulting in a choppy, immature style.	Sentence structure is adequate and free of serious fault, conveying the ideas satisfactorily, but it tends to be repetitive and on the dull side. Complex sentences are used, but the subordination of ideas is not as efficient as in the Superior paper. There is a discernible choppiness in the flow of the sentences.	Of the four kinds of writing assessed, describing has been found to call for the least elaborate sentence structure. However, effective description can be expanded by adjectives and adjectival phrases and clauses. The sentence structures in the Superior paper may not be elaborate, but they show good control over construction, that group like information, show relationships among different items, and place emphasis where it is most appropriate. There is easy handling of modifying and qualifying phrases and clauses, of sentence variety, length, and beginnings. The paper reads smoothly and pleasingly from beginning to end.

TASK EXPECTATIONS: GRADE 10

DESCRIBING

Tenth graders probably have received a fair amount of instruction in composition but often apply what they have learned only superficially or not at all. The typical range of quality is to be found in the papers they write, from superior to very poor. If many papers provide readers with some very pleasant surprises, it may be due not so much to dramatically improved skills as to the fact that these writers are very different people from junior high students. Tenth graders are young adults who have gained a measure of independence, who are aware of themselves as individuals, and who see the world consciously from their personal points of view. Their awareness of themselves and others as distinct individuals is often reflected in the voice and that comes through in their writing and in the way they address their readers. To a far greater extent than before, their writing reveals a personal investment, a cohesiveness, and a conscious effort to engage the reader.

Of the four kinds of writing in the Assessment, Describing is probably the least complex. It is also the kind most teachers find easiest to teach,so that it is quite likely the students have had more instruction and practice in this form than in the others. The task the student faces in describing something familiar for a reader involves a series of overlapping steps. Having selected a topic or having had it assigned, the writer must: 1) visualize the thing to be described and identify its features, both central and peripheral; 2) choose from among these features those that will do best what the writing is to do; 3) organize this information in a way that most clearly re-creates the picture; and 4) find the word and structures to achieve clarity and interest in the description. All throughout the describing process, the writer is visualizing and re-visualizing the subject, recalling or inventing further details, bringing into focus peripheral features that might be utilized, and trying to find better words to bring the word picture into sharper focus. Tenth graders should be able to meet these task requirements with a good degree of competence.

The test makers report the following about the tenth grade papers examined in the Assessment: 1) many papers provided unexpected pleasure; 2) most had a definite point of view that helped the effective selection of details and organization; 3) in the majority the point of view was extremely personal, not objective; 4) objective observation was not a primary characteristic; and 5) there was a marked fondness for generalization and abstraction instead of the specific and concrete.

Grade 10: Describing

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
GENERAL MERIT: Does the writer give a clear, well-focused, and vivid picture of what is being described? Can the reader say, "Yes, I get the picture"?	A "no" to the questions means a Poor paper. The writer was unable to fulfill the task requirements, and the paper is a confused mix of descriptive, general, and off-the-subject statements that do not add up to a picture.	A qualified "yes" to the overall questions means an Average paper. The writer has met the task expectations and the paper is adequate but not distinctive.	The paper merits a Superior rating if the answer to these questions is "Yes." There comes through the sense of a confident grasp of the task requirements and familiarity with the material, which is interestingly and vividly expressed from a particular point of view. Also coming through is a sense of a desire not just to describe objectively, but also to share with the reader a picture that has significance for the writer. The top papers display a sophistication, a sparkle, and sometimes humor, quite distinct from anything seen in the earlier grades.
IDEAS: Are they sufficient in number, in significance and relevance to the subject, and clear? The ideas in a description cover a range of information depending on the subject being described. A beach scene, a Fourth of July parade, a grandmother's face, grief over a loss, a strange sound, or scaling a wall--to name a few examples--all call for different combinations of details. In describing a place, the writer's ideas might include physical details that appeal to any of the senses: 1) visual--light, color, size, distance, height, space perspective; 2) sound--pitch, volume, texture; 3) tactile--heat, cold, dampness, weight, pressure, textures; 4) smell--aromatic, nauseous, offensive; and even 5) taste--salt, sweet, bitter, bland. In addition to physical details, ideas might include impressions, feelings, and memories associated with the place. Skillfully used, physical details and emotive details infuse the description with an atmosphere, or mood, that can evoke definite responses from the reader.	The Poor paper may not contain the information needed for the picture. The details may be irrelevant, unnecessary, skimpy, too hodgepodge, or too general to produce a picture for the reader.	The Average paper has a sufficiency of detail where number is concerned, but the choices are not as concrete or vivid as those in the Superior paper, and they do not build on one another to create a singular impression. Other papers may have too many details some irrelevant or unimportant, resulting in a clutter from which no clear and focused picture emerges.	A Superior paper shows a skillful choice of concrete detail, enough so that the reader can clearly visualize the subject, not too many that the reader is bogged down or distracted. In a top paper the writer has chosen details to produce a dominant impression. If describing a house, for example, that impression might be one of weathering, a lived-in quality, mystery, or whatever. In the choice of detail the writer may have tried to create atmosphere and succeeded in greater or lesser degree. Also, in greater or lesser degree, the writer has managed to convey very definite personal feelings about the subject.
ORGANIZATION: Are the ideas presented in an orderly and logical way? Organization of the details in a descriptive paper will differ with the	The lack of organization in the Poor paper makes it difficult to sort out the details and obtain a clear picture. Sometimes there is not enough information to organize.	In the Average paper, the lack of a clear organization tends to undermine the content. Elements of orderly grouping may be present, also an attempt to be	The grouping of details in the Superior paper shows that the writer had in mind the sequence in which the reader's re-creation of the picture was to proceed.

Grade 10: Describing

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
subject and with what the writing is to do. For example, it could be spatial, such as near to far, left to right, top to bottom, and so on. It could be by importance, with the most striking or significant details first, or it could reverse that order to build up to the most important. The order might be one of familiarity, as in describing something strange, when the writer might move from the familiar to the less familiar. The organization might follow a combination of two or more orders, but whatever organization is followed, it must help the reader's re-creation of the picture in the writer's minds.		consistent in point of view, but the progression tends to be random with not enough underlying direction. Transitions tend to be awkward or absent. Overall the organization may be adequate enough but without a clear sense of control.	The introduction of the subject usually comes at the beginning, but it can also be effectively led up to at the end. The details are presented in orderly progression with smooth transitions between groupings. Moreover, the details are presented from a single point of view. That point of view may be physical, as in an objective description of scene when the vantage point, fixed or moving, from which the scene is viewed is clear. It may be a mental point of view, as when a writer recalls details and feelings about a childhood home. A combined physical and mental point of view can inject a strong emotional quality to a description.
WORDING: Is wording appropriate, precise, graphic?	Wording in the Poor paper is imprecise, lackluster, immature, or careless, exhibiting little evidence of reach or effort to find better.	Wording in the Average paper is adequate but not especially vivid, picture-making. Many Average papers exhibit a marked effort to produce what the writer may consider adult writing. Characteristic of this tendency is the use of "big" words and phrases of generalizations, abstractions, and clichés instead of simple, direct, concrete words and phrases.	The wording of the Superior paper is precise and concrete, conveying the details of sight, sound, or mood in a vivid way. In a top paper, original figures of speech may be used to good effect. The language is natural and familiar rather than pretentious; nouns are specific rather than general; adjectives are not overused; and verbs are active rather than passive.
SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE: Are the sentences smooth, efficient, varied, and interesting? Does the whole flow well?	The range of sentence mastery may be very great in Poor papers, going from bare literacy to minimal adequacy to expressing ideas. The problem of rating is often compounded by the fact that the student has not kept to the topic, but written around it. Instead of the description called for, there may be explanations of one kind or another, or a narrative associated with the topic. If there are sentences that forward the describing process, they are poorly expressed and are usually simple and repetitive in structure. The flow from sentence to sentence is monotonous and leaves a distinct impression of far less competence than is found in the writing of students of this age and grade.	Though sentence structure is adequate and free of serious faults, the Average paper falls considerably short of the syntactic mastery evident in the Superior paper. Writing at the bottom of the Average range may be monotonously repetitive in the use of an unvaried simple sentence structure. Those at the middle and top may show more mature control but not in a striking way.	Of the four kinds of writing assessed, Describing has been found to call for the least elaborate sentence structures. However, effective description can be expanded by adjectives and adjectival phrases and clause. Although sentence structures may not be elaborate, the Superior paper shows mastery of constructions that group like information, show relationships among different items, and place emphasis where it is most appropriate. There is economy and efficiency in the way phrases are used instead of longer clauses; there is variety in sentence beginnings; and there is a good balance of longer and shorter sentences. The paper reads smoothly and pleasingly, with very little awkwardness.

TASK EXPECTATIONS: GRADE 3

NARRATING

Third graders are only beginning to do sustained writing, and their performance is uneven at best. In telling the story of a program they have seen on TV, or story they have read or heard, the youngsters are asked, among other things, to see the story as a whole with sufficient distance to distinguish beginning, middle, and end; to select the character or characters and other relevant details (obviously not everything can be included so there must be a choice of the more significant); to tell the story as clearly and interestingly as possible from a particular point of view and to organize the information in a manner to accomplish the purpose of the writing.

Not many third graders can do this. Most of them will recount step-by-step happenings with varying degrees of completeness and intelligibility. If they manage to tell the whole story, it will be by pushing the events together into a skimpy account which does not distinguish the important from the unimportant. Others will simply string together discrete incidents without articulating them into a story framework. They fail to distance themselves as storytellers and thus not only fail to see the story as a whole, but also tend to intrude themselves and their reactions to the original program into their attempt to retell.

Grade 3: Narrating

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
GENERAL MERIT: What is your impression of the story as whole--superior, mediocre, poor? How well can you follow the story and get its point?	The basic narrative element of character is present and an event or two, but these are not cast into a story framework; the events seem disconnected. The writing goes nowhere; it has no structure, no progression, no development, no point. In short, there is no story. The writing is not only sparse and marked with errors, it can be unintelligible. The writer mistakenly assumes that the reader shares the same information he/she has and thus tells virtually nothing.	The overall impression of the story is middling--of a piece produced in a perfunctory if earnest way, there is a sense of structure and progression in that a sequence of events is recounted which the reader can follow. However, the events are pushed together in a bare bones account, the details are sparse and not particularly significant, the vocabulary is "blah" and the story does not seem to make a clear point. The reader is left with a feeling "So"?	The story has a sense of structure, of form, a distinguishable beginning, middle, and end. It has a wholeness about it that is satisfying to the reader. All the traits (ideas, organization, wording, etc.) may not be uniformly strong, but they come together in a harmonious whole. The story hangs together, is easily followed, and makes a point that is clearly about something. A top paper might have a great deal of emotional appeal; it might even contain a spark of narrative invention even though the topic is a recalling of a TV episode or film, etc. It would convey an unmistakable sense that the writer is in control; it may even convey the sense of an emerging style.
IDEAS: Are the ideas presented clear, relevant to the story, and sufficient?	There are some ideas, mostly naming a character or two and mentioning a happening or two, but they are random and not related within a story frame. No matter how the skimpy ideas are arranged, they do not add up to a to a story. Instead of trying to advance a story line, the writer has a tendency to intrude with frequent personal reactions to the original TV/movie episode.	The ideas important to carry the story are just barely enough in quality and quantity, and there is little distinction between significant ideas and minor ones. The characters are named but hardly defined; what they do are recounted but not their motives or feelings, the ideas are bare bones, just sufficient to make the story intelligible. At the same time, there are a few distractions or irrelevancies.	The ideas bearing on the story are clear, although they may not be given fully developed, and their selection shows that the writer has some sense of what is more significant: the main character/s and their actions; the situation or complication, its causes and resolution; the story's point, which can emerge almost as a theme in a top paper. That paper may include aspects of setting (place and time) and rudiments of such narrative devices as foreshadowing (suspense), dialogue, flashback.
ORGANIZATION: Is the organization sequential, logical, coherent?	The ideas are not organized into any apparent story line.	The story ideas are arranged clearly and logically enough, but the ordering is again little more than bare bones chronological sequencing. The few events are related in a flat enumerative sequence, with no attempt at causal linking or other development. A consistent point of view is maintained, with little or no irrelevant intrusion of the writer into the story, but unlike the 6-7 paper, point of view makes little or no impact on the story. Some transitional devices are used (mostly conjunctions), but they do not contribute much to linking the parts together into a pleasing whole.	The story ideas are ordered (though not much developed) in a logical way, both chronologically (sequence of events) and emotionally (character's development or reader's anticipated reactions). The story gives a distinct impression of an overall structure (beginning, middle, end). The point of view is also consistent, with no irrelevant intrusion of the writer. Structure and point of view, along with simple transitional devices (mostly conjunctions and short linking clauses or phrases), make the whole story cohere.

Grade 3: Narrating

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
WORDING: Is the wording precise, vivid? Does it bring characters and events to life?	The vocabulary is limited, simplistic, repetitive. Word choices are often poor, overly colloquial, or incorrect.	There are no major inaccuracies of word choice and usage, but neither is there anything exceptional to distinguish this writing. Diction is flat, even, and on the whole appropriate but uninteresting.	There are no major errors of word choice or usage. Diction is appropriate if not startlingly original or dramatic, but there are enough instances of commendable wording (vivid, concrete words, forceful verbs, original figures of speech, nuances of meaning signalled by verb tense, etc.) to mark the Superior paper. The language has a freshness and flow that are exceptional.
SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE: Is the story flow smooth and interesting?	The sentences are simple, very close to the "and...and" stringing together of very young writers. Even though some subordinate clauses may occur, they appear in the context of very immature sentences resembling colloquial speech and are not effective.	Sentence structure is adequate to tell the story but not in a fluent and interesting way. Most commonly used are simple and compound sentences with a generous helping of the conjunctions "and," "but," and "then." Although a complex sentence or two may occur, they tend to be awkward (if technically correct), showing that the writer is less than confident about subordination. The use of transitional words is adequate.	The story "reads" smoothly and interestingly. There is variety in sentence types (simple, compound, complex), showing the writer's ability to put coordinate ideas and subordinate ideas into appropriate sentence structures. The complex sentences show that the writer can embed more than two ideas in a single sentence. There is a nice balance in sentence length and variety in sentence beginnings. Transitional words, phrases, and clauses are effectively used.

TASK EXPECTATIONS: GRADE 6

NARRATING

Retelling a story requires the student first of all to recall the characters and events of the story, placing them within the story framework, and from among these elements to select certain ones for presentation. What has to be pictures in the student's mind is not only in motion but must be seen with sufficient distance to encompass beginning, middle, and end and enable the reader to distinguish between the more important and the less important elements. Within the forward action of the story, the interrelationships of the elements, especially characters and events, may be constantly changing, so that the demands on syntactic structure may be quite heavy.

The writing assignment is the retelling of a television episode, a movie, a play, or a book the student has experienced, so that a minimum of narrative invention is involved. The purpose of writing is essentially informational rather than entertainment or expression, but because any retelling is a personal re-creating of the story and not necessarily an accurate recapitulation of the original, there is a great deal of room for personal expression and originality.

The narrative writing of sixth graders in the Assessment is not as lively and as competent as their descriptive writing. The samples reflect what seems to be typical of sixth graders' development in narration: a small number of superior writers achieve some degree of pacing in their storytelling and convey the impression that they grasp the story as a cohesive whole. Average writers just manage to map out the story events in correct sequence, and poor writers produce writing that is barely a story. Although at first glance the general performance at this level tends to be disappointing, a second look reveals that the students are making progress.

Grade 6: Narrating

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
GENERAL MERIT: What is your impression of the story as a whole-superior, mediocre, poor? How well can you follow the story and distinguish the characters?	The retelling fails to reach even the perfunctory adequacy of the Average paper. There is an attempt to place the events in some sort of sequence, and the basic narrative element of character is also present, but neither characters nor events are cast into a story framework that gives a sense of forward movement and completeness.	The overall impression of the story is middling and perfunctory. Although the events are ordered pretty much in proper sequence and characters named, the retelling on the one hand may be so pared down that it amounts to a dull summarization which fails to hold the reader's attention. On the other hand, it may be so full of undifferentiated detail that the reader is swamped.	The story has a sense of structure, of form, a distinguishable beginning, middle, and end. It has a wholeness about it that satisfies the reader. The dimensions of Ideas, Organization, Wording, and Syntax may not be uniformly good, but they come together nicely in a pleasing whole. The story hangs together, the characters are distinguishable, the sequence of events is clear in both time and logic. A top paper may show a considerable degree of imaginative development, including perhaps dialogue. It conveys a sense that the writer is in control and even enjoys the task.
IDEAS: Are the ideas presented clear, relevant to the story, and sufficient? In Narrating, the dimension of ideas would include first such elements as character, events and setting--the essential building blocks of fiction; then conflict arising from character and motivation, and the resolution of conflict; and theme, the idea or point, of the story. These core elements are not invented by the student but come from the original story. It is the way and the degree to which the student selects and develops these elements that will constitute the quality and richness of this dimension.	The Poor paper offers little more than ideas that bear more or less on the plot line. This line does not emerge clearly, however, so that the reader is left to wonder exactly how each detail fits in. Moreover, the details are extremely sparse and some seem irrelevant.	Enough details are provided to carry the plot, but the essentials are reduced to such an extent that there is only the bare bones of a story. What the student has written is essentially a synopsis, not a retelling. On the other hand, there may be too many details cluttering the narrative, and the reader has a hard time following the main line of the story.	Ideas crucial to delineating character and motive are present as well as those that develop the action and carry the story forward. The number and quality of details are sufficient to show that the student has developed the key ideas of the story. There may be, for example, details that reveal the feelings of the characters or explain the reasons for their actions. There may less attention given to the setting (time and place) of the story but if it is not a crucial element, its absence is not critical.
ORGANIZATION: Is the organization of ideas sequential, logical, coherent? In Narrating for sixth graders, the most important aspect of organization is probably the chronological sequencing of the story events. That ordering should enable the reader to grasp clearly where the story begins and where it ends. This sequence may be varied by attempts to use such narrative devices as flashback, foreshadowing, and simultaneity, most of which will probably not be very	The organization is uneven, the ideas often disconnected or even chaotic, and the story often left hanging without a sense of conclusion. Sometimes shifts in tense between present and past indicate that the writer is replying the show or story in the mind and recording what is happening rather than reporting what has happened. Often what is written so sparse as to require no real organization.	Organization is adequate in that the story chronology can be followed from beginning to end. However, it is a blow-by-blow account, with no grouping to indicate beginning, middle and end/no real distinction between main events and lesser ones.	The student is clearly in control of the story details. The events are grouped to provide forward development of the story, and background details are inserted where necessary. Beginning, middle, and end are clear, and transitions provide a smooth flow from part to part and from sentence to sentence. There may be a good try at some narrative device that varies the chronological sequence.

Grade 6: Narrating

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
successfull but which should be recognized for such and, if a good try, be rewarded. Cause and effect sequencing, where the student has tried to link character, motivation, action, and consequences, should also be recognized and rewarded. The point of view from which the story is told should be consistent throughout. Much of what the student does with organization will depend on the original story chosen by the student.			
WORDING: Is the wording clear, graphic? Does it carry the story along and bring the characters and situations to life?	Wording is dull and repetitive, often poor, overly colloquial, or incorrect. Because vocabulary is limited, the overall impression is one of immaturity.	The wording is adequate but generally uninspired and lacking in clarity and vividness.	Clarity is the primary consideration here, but vivid, concrete words, active verbs, and original figures of speech all contribute to bring characters and action to life.
SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE: Is the story flow smooth and interesting?	The sentences do not reach even the dull adequacy of the Average paper. They are simple and too often strung together with the "and," "buts," and "sos" of younger writers.	Sentence structure is adequate to tell the story but in a rather graceless way. The writing lacks the fluency and interest of the Superior paper. Most commonly used are simple and compound sentences, with a generous helping of the conjunctions "and," "but," "so," and "then." Subordination in the complex sentences are mostly of time (for example, "When the police came..." or "After they had dinner...").	The story reads smoothly and interestingly. There is variety in sentence types (simple, compound, complex), showing the writer's ability to put coordinate ideas and subordinate ideas into appropriate sentence structures. The appropriate use of phrases and clauses shows that the writer can embed more than two ideas in a single sentence. There is a nice balance of long and short sentences and variety in sentence beginnings. Transitional words phrases, and clauses are effectively used. Although there may be some inappropriate tense shifts (as seen in the Program Guide sample), it is not serious enough to cause confusion.

TASK EXPECTATIONS: GRADE 8

NARRATING

Retelling a story requires the student first of all to recall the characters and events of the story, placing them within the story framework, and from among these elements to select certain ones for presentation. What has to be pictured in the student's mind is not only in motion but must be seen with sufficient distance to encompass beginning, middle, and end and enable the reader to distinguish between the more important and the less important elements. Within the forward action of the story, the interrelationships of the elements, especially character and events, may be constantly changing, so that the demands on syntactic structure may be quite heavy.

The writing assignment is the retelling of a television episode, a movie, a play, or a book the student has experienced, so that a minimum of narrative invention is involved. The purpose of writing is essentially informational rather than entertainment or expression, but because any retelling is a personal re-creating of the story and not necessarily an accurate recapitulation of the original, there is a great deal of room for personal expression and originality.

Students of this age seem able to handle Narrating more efficiently than younger writers. Although they appear to have lost the willingness to share their thoughts with the reader that characterized younger writers, with the result that their papers are less lively, less enthusiastic, and less aware of audience, the majority of eighth grade writers seem able to distance themselves sufficiently from the story they have seen, heard, or read to see it as a whole. Their retellings have a clearer beginning, middle, and end and a better sense of what is important. A few of the superior writers handle characters with greater psychological insight than the best of the younger writers; they group the crucial details that advance the story; they handle tense with ease; and they look forward and back as appropriate and mesh continuous and discrete events with considerable skill. Even in samples that are confusing, there seems to be a discernible attempt to tell the whole story. Major flaws were generally a result of omitting some important event, rather than from cluttering the story with unnecessary detail.

Grade 8: Narrating

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
GENERAL MERIT: What is your impression of the story as a whole--superior, mediocre, poor? How well can you follow the story and distinguish the characters?	The story is summarized so poorly that the reader can barely make it out--there is an incomplete grasp of the whole, a tendency to focus on only a part of the story. Events are told either blow-by-blow, with no attempt to distinguish between important and less important details, or the retelling is incomplete, the writer seemingly unaware of what readers need to be told in order to understand the story.	The Average sample is typically adequate in setting out the necessary details of the story: characters and events and their progression through the story, and occasionally setting. The retelling gives the impression that the writer does see the story as a whole. However, in contrast to the Superior sample, this piece lacks the delineation of the different stages of the story. While the events are laid out in sequence, there is little indication of their relative significance and hence no shaping to enhance the reader's understanding and pleasure. Moreover, the choice of words is dull, the sentence structure is monotonous, and overall the impression is one of pedestrian adequacy.	The story has a clear sense of structure--a distinguishable beginning that sets the scene and a clear progression through well-defined stages of the story to the conclusion. The main characters are identified, and both vocabulary and syntactic structure play their part in advancing the story in a lively and enjoyable fashion. The retelling leaves the reader with a sense of completion and satisfaction.
IDEAS: Are the ideas presented clear, relevant to the story, and sufficient? In Narrating, the dimension of ideas would include first such elements as character, events, and setting--the essential building blocks of fiction; then conflict arising from character and motivation, and the resolution of conflict; and theme, the idea or point, of the story. These core elements are not invented by the student but come from the original story. It is the way and the degree to which the student selects and develops these elements that will continue the quality and richness of this dimension.	The details are so skimpy and so undifferentiated in significance that judgment is difficult. Characters may be named, a story line may emerge but obscured by details that seem irrelevant.	There may be an abundance of details in the Average retelling. On the other hand, it may be a rather bare bones summarization. In either case, the writer fails to make a clear distinction between significant details and those of lesser significance.	The ideas are sufficient to carry the story and bring it to life for the reader. The scene is set for the action to follow. (See the telling details in the first paragraph of the Superior sample.) The characters are clearly identified; their motives and emotions made plain. (In the sample, note that the doctors and important members of the staff are both named and identified; note why Colonel Potter assigns Radar to play records over the loudspeaker system and why the doctors begin to make "little white lies.") A theme, or point, may emerge although it may not be explicitly stated. (In the sample, it is clearly implied that Radar's music and the doctors' "little white lies" combine to help the wounded until fresh supplies arrive.)
ORGANIZATION: Is the organization of ideas sequential, logical, coherent? Much of what the student does with organization will depend on the original story chosen by the student and the point of view taken to retell it. For eighth graders as for sixth graders, the most important aspect of organization is	The paper is so lacking in ideas that it requires little in the way of organization. If the paper is longer, the organization is a flat stringing out of events and characters, more or less correct in sequence but exhibiting little else to help or hold the reader.	There are no major errors in organization. The chronological sequence is clear, the characters are introduced at the proper times, and the story moves from beginning to end in understandable sequence. However, the piece lacks the organizational sophistication of the Superior paper. Missing is the delineation into clear stages of development, the neat	The story progression is straightforward and clear, with the situation or setting established at the outset. The stages of development are also clearly delineated, with relevant details appropriately grouped. Within the well-organized framework, the reader is given other aids to understanding and enjoying the story: characters are "signposted"--that is, properly identified at

Grade 8: Narrating

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
probably the chronological sequencing of the story events. That ordering should enable the reader to grasp clearly where the story begins and where it ends. This sequence may be varied by attempts to use such narrative devices as flashback, foreshadowing, and simultaneity, most of which will probably not be very successful but which should be recognized for such and, if a good try, be rewarded. The point of view from which the story is told should be consistent throughout.		summarizations of action, the smooth transitions. As a result, the retelling is flat and uninteresting. (The Average sample is typical.)	the appropriate time through appositives; and short, vivid summaries tie the action together. (In the Superior sample, such phrases as "All is calm" and "The battle has begun" serve this helpful summarizing function.) Transitions are smooth, and time indicators help the sequencing.
WORDING: Is the wording clear, graphic? Does it carry the story along and bring the characters and situations to life?	The wording is limited, immature, repetitive, and dull. It is frequently colloquial to the point of slang.	The wording is correct but generally very flat and dull.	The wording is efficient, clear, and often vivid. The writer is comfortably in command of active verbs, seems to be aware of the effects of verb tense like the continuous present, uses appropriate adjectives and occasional figures of speech.
SYNTACTIC STRUCTURES: Is the story flow smooth and interesting? Is there variety in sentence type, length, and beginning? Does the whole cohere?	Syntax resembles that used by much younger writers. It is characterized mostly by simple and compound sentences liberally sprinkled with "and," "but," "so," and "then." If complex sentences are used, the subordinate clauses are usually of time (for example, "When..." of "After...") or of cause ("because...").	There are no serious errors of syntax, but the paper lacks the syntactical sophistication of the Superior paper. The reader has the impression that the writer has a considerable distance to grow to achieve that kind of sophistication. Simple sentences are used to the point of monotony and choppiness; they could be combined into complex sentences if the writer could better differentiate between main and subordinate ideas.	The writer has a command of syntax which results in a paper that has grace and efficiency. It reads well from beginning to end. There is variety in sentence types (simple, compound, complex) and in sentence beginnings, and a good balance of long and short sentences. Throughout, syntax supports the movement and the interrelationships of elements within the story (for example, note the use of subordinate clauses and phrases, also the summing-up function of the short sentences in the Superior sample).

TASK EXPECTATIONS: GRADE 10

NARRATING

Experiencing a story assumes that the student is able to discern a moving sequence of information, noting what is happening now and storing perceptions of what has happened so far. It assumes that the student is able to see the relationships among characters and events, noting especially both chronology and causation, including motivation. Retelling requires the student first of all to recall the characters and events of the story, placing them within the story framework, and from among these elements to select certain ones for presentation. What has to be pictured in the student's mind is not only in motion but must be seen with sufficient distance to encompass beginning, middle, and end, and to distinguish between what is more important and what is less important. Within the forward action of the story, the interrelationships of the elements, especially character and events, may be constantly changing, so that the demands on syntactic structure may be quite heavy.

The writing assignment is the retelling of a television episode, a movie, a play, or a book the student has experienced, so that a minimum of narrative invention is involved. The purpose of writing is essentially informational rather than entertainment or expression, but because any retelling is a personal re-creating of the story and not necessarily an accurate recapitulation of the original, there is a great deal of room for personal expression and originality.

High school students have improved their narrative writing some since their junior high years, but their progress leaves much to be desired. Technically they have few problems in recounting a plot in understandable sequence and in including the most significant characters and events. Wording, organization, and syntax are adequate enough. However, generally lacking in tenth grade writing is the clear delineation of stages in the story's development and evidence of the writer's shaping of progressive happenings at each stage. This lack is especially evident in showing up cause-and-effect relationships and the juxtaposition of character, motivation, and action. (A comparison of the Superior samples for grades 10 and 8 is quite revealing.) Moreover, the emerging self-awareness of high school students that made for some interesting work in Describing does not seem to come forth in Narrating.

Grade 10: Narrating

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
GENERAL MERIT: What is your impression of the story as a whole--superior, mediocre, poor? How well can you follow the story and distinguish the characters?	The retelling is a bare bones summary of the story line. It may meet the requirements of a synopsis but goes little beyond it.	The retelling is basically a blow-by-blow account of the action, accurate enough in sequence but with little attempt to distinguish the main from lesser elements or to shape the story into discernible stages. It tends to be longer than necessary because of the writer's inability to distinguish between significant details and those of lessor significance.	The story has a clear sense of structure: a beginning which sets the stage for what is to follow, a middle that develops what was introduced, and an end that brings the story situation to a resolution. The reader has an impression that the writer was able to get far enough away from the material to allow an overall view, select the key elements, and then take the account through its main stages. The retelling leaves the reader with a satisfying sense of completion.
IDEAS: Are the ideas presented clear, relevant to the story, and sufficient? In Narrating, the dimension of Ideas would include first such elements as character, events, and setting--the essential building blocks of fiction; then conflict arising from character and motivation, and the theme, the idea or point, of the story. These core elements are not invented by the student but come from the original story. It is the way and the degree to which the student develops these elements that will constitute the quality and richness of this dimension.	The Poor paper skimps on ideas. It is more of a short summary, a synopsis, of the story; sometimes it is a random account of some events in the story that stayed with the writer. Thus the retelling lacks body and interest; for the reader the story never comes to life.	The Average paper often tends to be loaded with too much detail, the writer having failed to emphasize the more important ideas or lacking the syntactic skill to subordinate the lesser ideas. Sometimes a vital idea is left out, leaving a sense of something missing, but it is possible to follow the story sequence.	Included are the ideas crucial to carrying the story: those that elucidate character and motive, those that develop the setting (if setting is important), and those that carry the action forward. There is enough development through details to bring characters to life and contribute to the forward thrust of the story.
ORGANIZATION: Is the organization of ideas sequential, logical, coherent? Much of what the student does with organization will depend on the original story chosen by the student and the point of view taken to retell it. For tenth graders as well as for eighth and sixth graders, the most important aspect of organization is probably the chronological sequencing of the story events. That ordering should enable the reader to grasp clearly where the story begins and where it ends. Tenth graders may try oftener to vary the sequence by using various narrative devices, such as flashback, foreshadowing, and	The story has a clear structure and straightforward progression of events which fall into well-defined stages, each competently organized within itself and smoothly moving to the next stage. The more sophisticated writer may have attempted a variation of sequencing in such a narrative device as flashback and handled the shift in chronology with a good degree of skill.	The sequencing of events and attendant details may be correct, but the information comes at the reader with no demarcation into stages and little or no guidance as to what is important and what is not.	The ideas are so few and skimpy that organization poses no real demands on the writer. Organizing a synopsis is much easier than retelling a story, which involves organizing relevant details within an overall framework.

Grade 10: Narrating

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
simultaneity, and may be more successful in pulling this off than younger writers. They should also be more successful in handling cause and effect sequencing, linking character, motivation, action, and consequences. A consistent point of view in the retelling contributes to good organization.			
WORDING: Is the wording clear, graphic? Does it carry the story along and bring the characters and situations to life?	There are no serious inaccuracies of wording, but the word choices are pedestrian in the extreme. There are occasional lapses into slang, jargon, or rudimentary language. Evaluation of this dimension is further handicapped by the synoptic nature of the paper--the retelling is too short to show what the writer might be capable of doing.	The wording is accurate but without much vigor or interest. The overall impression is that of an adequacy that rarely rises above a pedestrian earnestness.	Wording is clear, concrete, active rather than passive. Figurative language, when used, is effective and enhance the details that are selected to carry the story along and bring characters and situations to life.
SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE: Is the story flow smooth and interesting? Is there variety in sentence type, length, and beginning? Does the whole cohere?	Syntactic control is not incompetent, but there are many awkward structures. The shortness of the piece tends to present a problem in evaluating this dimension.	There are no serious errors of syntax, but the paper lacks the syntactical sophistication of the Superior paper. The reader has the impression that the writer has a considerable distance to grow to achieve that kind of sophistication. Simple sentences are over-used, contributing to a choppy style. When complex sentences are used, the outcome is not very successful. Verb forms, specifically infinitives, gerunds, and present participles, are used with some fluency, but tense shifts in verb use seem to present problems.	The paper has grace and efficiency; it reads well from beginning to end. There is variety in sentence types (simple, compound, complex) and in sentence beginnings, and a good balance of longer and shorter sentences. Throughout, syntax supports the movement and the interrelationships of elements within the story--subordinate elements are subordinated in appropriate clauses and phrases, and main clauses.

TASK EXPECTATIONS: GRADE 3

EXPLAINING

Third graders are only beginning to write longer compositions, and their progress toward mastery is uneven. Their performance will vary widely--within a paper, from paper to paper, and from student to student.

In explaining how to do something, the third grader faces a more demanding and restricting task than in either Describing or Narrating. The child is familiar with a process, like playing a particular game or making fudge, in a largely nonverbal way. The knowledge is operational. This process must now be translated into words. The essential steps or points must be identified, then presented from the reader's point of view so that the reader understands the process. The details of the process must be made as exact and as concrete as possible so that the steps are clear (and third graders are still trying to understand what is concrete!). Then, to stay on course, the child must not confuse the how and the whys of the process--an easy thing to do, because explaining a process can sometimes resemble explaining why something exists and what effects it has. More, the child has to avoid the trap of particularization and instead cast the explanation in terms that will give it general applicability.

The demands of the task of explaining a process or an operation in writing are not easy to meet, but given simple and familiar topics to write about, most third graders should manage quite well.

Grade 3: Explaining

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
GENERAL MERIT: Would you be able to follow the instructions easily and come up with the desired result?	"No" is clearly the answer in the Poor paper; the explanation would never enable the reader to understand the process. The writer may be familiar with the process but is unable to meet the task requirements to communicate that knowledge.	The writer clearly falls short of the task expectations and the reader's reaction is generally one of "Not quite." The goal of the explanation may or may not be stated initially or be clearly implicit in the steps; describing the steps in the series may not be clearly given; the wording may lack precision, be generally correct but undistinguished. The impression of the piece as a whole is of a writer knowledgeable enough about the process but without the matching skills to communicate it adequately.	If the answer to the question is "Yes," the paper merits a high rating. The writer has met the task expectations and fulfilled the assignment in a satisfying way. The impression of the paper as a whole is that the writer is familiar with the process and confident about communicating it.
IDEAS: Is all the crucial information included? Are they relevant and sufficient to explain the process from beginning to end?	The Poor paper lacks a good part of the information essential to understanding the process. The faults listed for the Average category may be present in greater degree, especially the paucity of ideas, so that the paper is often very short. Very often the writer seems to assume that what he/she knows optionally of the process (and this may be very thorough) is also known to the reader, so there is a tendency to omit important details. Another characteristic is the particularity of the ideas offered: the writer is unable to draw from specific personal experiences the generalizability that would make the idea applicable to others.	The information in the Average paper falls short of that in the top paper. The paper shows that the writer tried to differentiate each step in the process but was not entirely successful. There may be gaps in the steps, confusion between an essential idea and a clarifying or supporting detail, some of the ideas simply may not be clear. Very often the writer seems to assume that the reader is familiar with the process and so provides only the barest minimum of information. The opposite can also occur, with the writer giving more information that is really necessary.	Depending on the topic, the ideas (information, content) would include, in addition to the steps or points in the process, such other information as the equipment, supplies, or other help needed; the best time and place to carry out the process; precautions to take; things to watch for; and results to expect.
ORGANIZATION: Is the ordering of the explanation sequential, logical, and coherent?	The Poor paper leaves the reader in a "state of confused unknowing." The problems seen in the Average paper are present in acuter degree. Backtracking, repeats, jumps, telescoping (pushing ideas together and condensing), and stringing ideas without grouping, ordering, or guidance for the reader are common faults. Transitions between steps are minimal or lacking altogether, and it is difficult to tell where one step ends and another begins. Very often so little is written that there is nothing to organize.	The Average paper has a plan, but it is a loose one not as clearly followed as in the Superior paper. There may be no overall guidance for the reader at the beginning to tell what the explanation is about. There may be jumps and repeats in sequence, and the transitions from one step or point to the next may not be well managed. Sometimes the writer may simply enumerate the steps 1, 2, 3 with no particular attention to whether the steps are of parallel importance or in sequential order. It is clear that the writer knows the process well enough but cannot organize that knowledge to communicate it as well.	The Superior paper has a clear plan. The writer has laid out the essential steps or points from start to finish in proper order and provided good transitions from step to step. If the goal of the explanation is not stated at the end as a summarizing cap, the steps or points so clearly bear on the process that the absence of the statement is not a major fault. The writer also knows where and how to end the explanation.

Grade 3: Explaining

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
WORDING: Is wording precise, graphic?	Wording in the Poor paper lacks precision. There are many catchalls, giving the paper a definite impression of immaturity, a sense that the writer does not have command of enough exact words to describe a relatively simple process. Transitions are rudimentary, the ideas strung out mostly by the coordinate conjunction "and." In most cases, however, the problem is less of wording than of a general inability to meet the task requirements.	The wording of the Average paper is generally correct but undistinguished. It is adequate but not very precise, and there is greater use of verbal catchalls, such as the various forms of "go," "get," "do," "put," and "have." (See the Average sample in the Program Guide for an example of the overuse of "get.") The use of transitional words and phrases is minimal.	Precision and concreteness are important criteria in explaining because they help make explanations clear. For example, "rinse off the lather" is more precise and concrete than "wash off the soap"; and "fill the tub half full with warm water" says more exactly what should be done than just "fill the tub with water." Articles of equipment or supplies are called by their proper names, and the verbs used to describe the actions in the process are accurate and concrete. The Superior paper exhibits these characteristics. Also it keeps to a minimum a typical fault of beginning writers: the use of verbal catchalls, such as "have to" to "must" or "need," (the Superior sample in the Program Guide contains several examples of the catchall). Transitional words and phrases, such as "first," "next," "then," "finally," "at the same time," may not be used at every point where they are desirable, and pronoun references may not be clear in every case, but what is used is, on the whole, managed well.
SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE: Does sentence structure reflect the relationship of ideas, and is it adequate to get the explanation across? Does it make for smooth and interesting reading?	The Poor paper definitely shows immature control of syntax. The sentences are usually short and simple. If longer, they are usually simple-minded compounds strung together by "and," "but," "so." There may be an occasional use of subordinate clauses, but they tend not to serve well their function of expressing idea relationships because they are buried in a string of run-on sentences that fail to define the steps of the process clearly. (See Poor sample in Program Guide.) There may be serious errors of syntax, and sometimes the student simply has not written enough for the reader to judge.	The Average writer uses some of the constructions noted in the Superior paper but not as consistently, smoothly, or with as much assurance. The constructions may not be as mature, and there may be a tendency for certain ones to be repeated often enough that it reduces sentence variety and detracts from smooth reading. There are few major errors of syntax, such as run-ons and fragments.	Explaining calls for various syntactic structures that express time, condition, cause, and purpose. The Superior paper shows good control over subordinate clauses that clarify idea relationships (for example, "when the tub is filled," "after you rinse the fur," "until the suds are gone," "because the water was too cold," "if the animal refuses to stand still"). There may be verbal and predicate combinations in compound structures that are very efficient (for example, "washing the dog is fun," "to get the fur really clean," "dry and comb the fur"). There is also variety in sentence length, types, and beginnings. Overall the composition reads well and gives the impression of assurance and control.

TASK EXPECTATIONS: GRADE 6

EXPLAINING

The assignment is to explain a process or an operation familiar to the writer, with the emphasis on how a desired result is to be reached. The explanation may take the form of specific instructions to achieve the desired result. The writer has to select the key steps of that process, place them in chronological sequence, provide enough supporting detail for each step so that the reader can reach the same result by following the steps.

In some ways Explaining is a less complex task than Narrating. For a familiar activity, the material already exists in the student's mind and can be scrutinized for completeness and exactness during the writing process. There are fewer complex elements, such as characters, events, motivation, and conflict, that have to be managed, with time and setting as additional considerations. In Explaining, most of the given topics can be handled in a simple, straightforward, direct manner, the exception being perhaps the explanation of a complex team sport. If Explaining is simpler than Narrating, it does make greater demands for precision in selecting, ordering, and expressing the essential steps of the process.

Sixth grade writing in the Assessment is powered by enthusiasm in a way not so apparent in eighth grade writing, which seems lacking in vitality. Sixth graders are beginning to stand back more from their subject, to view it more broadly and objectively, to be more conscious of how they feel about it. They seem to be more conscious of the reader and his/her needs. Wording on the whole continues to be bland though adequate, and syntactic structure matures. These characteristics combine to produce writing that is generally well organized and contains significant information for the reader, with few irrelevancies overall.

Grade 6: Explaining

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
GENERAL MERIT: Would the paper as a whole enable the reader to come up with the desired result? Does it cohere and does it read well?	Little is explained; the paper is more enumerative than explanatory. The desired result could not be reached by means of this paper.	The paper as a whole is adequate but not outstanding in any way. There may be gaps in the sequence, some confusion between major and minor details, resulting in a loss of precision.	All essential steps and important supporting details are present. The reader is able to follow the process clearly from beginning to end. The paper reads smoothly and well.
IDEAS: Are the ideas sufficient in number, significant, precise, and relevant?	The Poor paper is lacking in both the number, significance, and clarity of ideas. There are often distracting details included.	Although adequate as a whole, the information falls short of being clear and complete. There may be missing steps in the process, confusion between essential and lesser detail, some irrelevancies, sometimes even an overload of information.	The Superior paper provides all the essential information. The key steps are explained fully, the supporting details are well chosen and properly placed. It often includes additional touches which add to the interest--a caution, an observation of some kind, a recollection of a past experience with that particular point, etc.--so that beyond mere information, something of the writer's personality comes through.
ORGANIZATION: Is the ordering of the explanation sequential, logical, and coherent?	The paper suffers from major organizational faults: stringing information with little regard for importance, sequence, or grouping; repetition; telescoping (pushing ideas together and condensing instead of explaining them separately when it is necessary to do so); and poor or no transitions. Frequently there is not enough information to organize.	The Average paper has a general plan, but its stages are not as clearly marked as in the Superior paper. There is usually a statement of purpose, but some of the steps may be out of sequence or missing, additional helpful detail to give a fuller picture may be missing. Transitions are adequate. It is apparent that the writer's knowledge of the process is sufficient, but the ability to organize this information does not match that knowledge.	There is a clear plan from beginning to end. The purpose is usually stated first for the reader's guidance, but it can be led up to as a cap at the end of the explanation. Sometimes it is stated in different ways at both beginning and end. The steps between are clearly arranged, with smooth transitions between. If there are additional ideas, such as very personal asides, cautions, observations, etc., they are inserted in the proper places.
WORDING: Is wording precise, graphic?	Wording is uninteresting, repetitive, and decidedly limited. The writer may be thoroughly familiar with the process but lacks the word power to explain it.	Wording is on the whole adequate and correct, but is on the bland side. Although some appropriate technical terms may be used (for example, "dribble," "set up a play," etc. in the Average sample of the Program Guide, Primary 3), there is a greater tendency than the Superior writer to use general-purpose words rather than specific and concrete words.	Wording is precise and concrete. Specific words are used for specific things, whether they are necessary supplies or equipment or actions involved in the process, and there is a minimum of all-purpose words. There may be an occasional flash of vividness or variety (as in a figure of speech used to make a comparison).
SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE: Does syntax reflect the relationship of ideas, and is it adequate to get the explanation across. Does it make for smooth and interesting reading?	The Poor paper exhibits a lack of syntactic control. Subordination is occasionally used and used correctly, but there is a preponderance of short simple sentences or short compounds, resulting in both choppiness and an impression of immaturity.	The Average paper contains subordinate structures, but they are not used as efficiently and as flexibly as in the Superior paper. The tendency is to shorter simple sentences and strings joined by conjunctions, which results in a choppy style. There is nothing wrong, but nothing outstanding.	The Superior paper shows that the writer has good control of subordinate clause and phrase constructions that express relationships of time, condition, cause/effect, or purpose. There is a nice balance of short and long sentences, variety in sentence beginnings, and the whole reads smoothly and well.

TASK EXPECTATIONS: GRADE 8

EXPLAINING

In the assignments for Explaining, the writer faces the task of making clear to the reader an operation or a process which has a definite goal. It is a straightforward piece of informational writing in which the steps, or stages, of the process must be laid out in proper sequence, the subordinate details of each step identified and organized, and the consequences or results of the steps or of the whole pointed out, so that the reader can get a clear understanding of the whole process and reach the same goal.

As laid out in the Assessment, Explaining in some ways is less complex than Narrating. The writer need not manipulate several different elements, like characters, motivation, conflict, and events, as they move through time. With perhaps the exception of explaining a team sport most of the assignments focus on a single result, the order is chronological, the point of view is single and static, and the purpose is clearly informational. On the other hand, Explaining makes greater demands on accuracy, on clear recognition of the crucial steps and their effects in a series of actions, and precision in conveying this information.

Overall, eighth grade writers in the Assessment, when compared with sixth grade writers, show only a limited increase in realizing their potential in intellect and skills. They do not seem as interested in sharing their ideas through writing. As a result there seems to be a loss of the vitality found in earlier writing; their papers generally are less lively. In Explaining, the improvement is only very general, most of the writers apparently more secure in handling the topics than younger students, and the Superior writers clearly ready for more demanding topics. Two areas of challenge for Average and Poor writers are: 1) precision in the selection of content and 2) translation into words and structures the operational knowledge (doing) which is still largely nonverbal.

Grade 8: Explaining

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
GENERAL MERIT: Would the paper as a whole enable the reader to follow the steps and come up with the desired results? Does the paper hang well together and read well?	The paper suffers from imprecision and omission; important steps are missing or left undeveloped. The whole gives an impression of an inability to explain clearly a process that should be totally familiar to the writer.	On the whole the paper is adequate, not deficient in any serious way, but not outstanding in any particular respect.	The paper is clear, informative, and to the point. There are no irrelevancies that distract. The expression is simple and precise, occasionally vivid.
IDEAS: Are the ideas sufficient in number, significant, precise, and relevant?	There is an insufficiency of ideas, the writer appearing to assume that the reader understands the process enough not to require a fuller explanation. There is also a failure to distinguish between crucial and lesser steps and a tendency for irrelevant details to intrude.	Most of the key steps are included as well as clarifying or supporting details, but they lack the completeness and precision of the Superior paper. The writer is not always clear what the main cluster of ideas should be in order to reach the goal of the explanation.	All the key points, including a statement of purpose, are included. Additional details, when present, all bear on the point being explained.
ORGANIZATION: Is the ordering of the explanation sequential, logical, coherent?	The ideas are so limited that organization can contribute little. If there are several steps or lesser details given, they are not arranged in a way to give the reader an orderly idea of the process.	The Average paper falls short of the precise ordering of ideas seen in the Superior paper. The sequence of steps may be unclear or confusing in places, the writer backtracking or allowing some minor detail to intrude. The clear line from start to the result is thus blurred. Transitions are adequate.	The Superior paper usually opens with a statement of the purpose but not necessarily so. The goal may be stated as the culmination of a carefully arranged series of steps. Sometimes it may be stated in different ways at both beginning and end. The steps in the process are sequentially ordered, and the supporting details for each appropriately placed. Transitions between the steps are neatly handled with words like "first," "next," "finally."
WORDING: Is wording precise, graphic?	There may not be major errors, but wording is imprecise, pedestrian, sometimes immature.	The wording is correct and generally adequate but decidedly ordinary and uninteresting. There is a tendency to use all-purpose words instead of specific words ("and other things" in the Average sample of Program Guide, Advanced).	Wording is precise, concrete. Specific words are used for specific things, whether they are supplies, equipment, or actions involved in the process itself, and there is a minimumof general all-pupose words. Technical terms when used are accurate. There may be an occasional flash of vividnoss or variety (as in figures of speech to make a comparison).
SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE: Does sentence structure reflect the relaitonship of ideas, and is it adequate to get the explanation across effectively? Does it make for smooth and interesting reading?	Sentence constructions are simple and monotonous, resulting in a rather choppy style. There is a minimum of subordination often a whole simple sentence is used to express an idea which a more practiced writer would collapsed into a more efficient subordinate clause or phrase construction (see explanation of doggy paddle in Poor sample in Program Guide, Advanced).	Although the Average paper contains some of the efficient structures of the Superior paper, the impression of assurance and control is not as clear as in the Superior paper. There is a tendency to use the same structures too often, which results in a monotonous style.	The Superior paper shows control of subordination by clause and phrase to express relationships of time, condition, cause/effect, and purpose, and to achieve a more efficient and economical style. There is a pleasing variety of sentence types, beginnings, and length. Overall the piece reads well and gives the impression of assurance and control.

TASK EXPECTATONS: GRADE 10

EXPLAINING

The assignments for Explaining call on the writer to make clear for the reader an operation or a process which leads to a definite result. They require the writer to identify the key steps by which the result is obtained, to select important details that help explain the steps, order these steps and point out the relationships, causes, and effects of the steps taken.

As laid out in the Assessment, Explaining in some ways is less complex than Narrating in that the writer need not manipulate a number of different elements such as characters, motivation, conflict, and events, in their passage through time. The assignments are straightforward and sharply focused. The sequence is chronological; the point of view is single and static. On the other hand, Explaining makes greater demands of the writer in differentiating between what are crucial steps and details and what are not; and in exactness in conveying this information.

Most tenth graders in the Assessment show that they have something to say and are willing to share it in writing. They are also able to get their ideas down with an appreciable degree of competence. Thus their writing may be a pleasant surprise after the lack luster performance of the general run of eighth graders. This is not so much because tenth graders have improved dramatically in writing ability as it is because they are quite different people from eighth graders. Tenth graders are young adults conscious of themselves, increasingly aware of their place in the world, yet aware of others and other points of view. This maturation is reflected in their writing overall, which shows a greater cohesiveness and sense of personal investment and a conscious effort to engage the reader. In Explaining, some papers may show a tendency to become too abstract, too general for practical help, but on the whole, the writing shows a definite improvement in the various dimensions.

Grade 10: Explaining

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
GENERAL MERIT: Would the paper as a whole enable the reader to follow the steps and come up with the desired result? Does it cohere and read well?	There are gaps in the information, and insufficiency of supporting detail, and a general impression of sparsity and imprecision.	The paper as a whole is adequate, not deficient in any way but not especially outstanding in any particular dimension. It is bland, without the completeness and precision of the Superior paper.	The paper as a whole is clear, comprehensive, and economically expressed, giving an impression of mastery and confidence: the writer knows the subject and has the means to convey the information effectively.
IDEAS: Is all crucial information included? Are the ideas clear, relevant, and sufficient to explain the process from beginning to end?	The information is too sparse to give a complete picture. The principal steps may not be clearly identified, there may be a sparsity of supporting detail and some irrelevancies that get in the way.	The ideas are generally adequate, but there are gaps in information that make the explanation less clear, less precise. There may be some irrelevant details, some failure to distinguish between significant and less significant supporting details in explaining the steps.	All the essential information is included: the introductory or culminating statement of purpose; the main steps of the process in proper sequence; helpful suporting detail; and, frequently, additional details (personal remarks, observations, cautions, asides, etc.) which impart a personal tone, all in the appropriate context.
ORGANIZATION: Is the ordering of the explanation sequential, logical, and coherent?	There is a discernible sequence throughout, with transitions provided: "first," "next," "soon," etc., but the steps are enumerative, a listing, rather than explanatory. Too much essential or helpful detail is lacking to organize.	There is a step-by-step progression through the process for the most part, but it tends to break down in places. An important step may be skipped; some supporting details may get in the way because they are given too much prominence, or they are out of place or missing altogether; a definite sense of the end, of the process completed, may be lacking, leaving the reader with the sense that the piece needs to be tied up. Transitions for the most part are adequate.	There is a logical progression of ideas throughout: the purpose stated clearly at the beginning, sometimes recapped at the end, or occasionally built up to as a culmination; the key steps in proper sequence and supporting details in place; other contributing details in proper context; transitions managed smoothly. The reader is led through the steps in such a way that the whole process is made effortlessly understandable.
WORDING: Is wording precise, graphic?	Wording is satisfactory enough without errors, but short on precision and somehow giving the impression of limitation. It may be the lack of content that leaves the impression that the writer was unable or unwilling to render the operation symbolically in a complete and understandable way. Wording would reflect this failure.	Wording is adequate, consistently and pleasantly on the formal side, with sentences cast in the imperative mood. At the lackluster side, wording is not particularly distinguished.	Wording is precise and appropriate for the task, imparting a tone that is rather formal but not stiff, and conveying the sense that the writer is taking the task seriously. Technical terms are used accurately; verbs are specific rather than general; transitional words, phrases, and clauses are especially well chosen (see Superior sample in Program Guide, Task 2). Here and there, where a personal remark, observation, or caution is added, the wording may loosen up, conveying a pleasant, informal tone.
SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE: Does sentence structure reflect idea relationships, and is it adequate to get the explanation across? Does it make for smooth and interesting reading?	The sentences are correct but lack variety. There is very little subordination; sentence mood is preponderantly imperative; sentence beginnings are repetitive;	The average paper contains different subordinate structures also but far fewer than does the Superior paper and with considerably less mastery and flexibility.	The writing shows a comfortable mastery or subordination, with several different kinds of clauses and phrases used to express time, condition, cause,

Grade 10: Explaining

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
	sentence length is quite uniformly short--all of which contributes to a choppy, monotonous style. Again, lack of content is a contributing factor to the weakness of this dimension; the ideas are too sparse to be rendered through words and structures other than the simplest.	The sentences tend to be short and similar in structure, resulting in a rather choppy and uninteresting style. Although the sentences are correct and for the most part mature, the impression remains that the writer has a way yet to go in expressing idea relationships through various kinds of structures.	description, etc. The ability to reduce constructions to achieve a more efficient and economical style is very much in evidence. There is variety in sentence types, beginnings, and length. The imperative mood, which can result in monotony if overused, is lightened by such alternative wording as: "You will need," "You may now," "It would be advisable," etc. There is a smooth flow throughout.

TASK EXPECTATIONS: GRADE 3

REASONING

In Describing, Narrating, and Explaining the material already exists in the mind of the writer and must be scrutinized for exactness, completeness, and significance before and during the writing process. In Reasoning, the material in the mind is most often brought into being and shaped by the writing process itself. Writing thus becomes a tool for discovering precisely what one thinks and feels about a subject.

The aim of the writing assignment in Reasoning is to assess how well students can order and express their opinions, not how much they know about a given topic. The topics in the assessment deal with matters about which students are likely to have strong personal opinions. They should be able to draw upon their own information, their own ideas and feelings. Neither is persuasion to a particular point of view an aim of the assignment. The arguments will be presented on a controversial topic. The object of writing is to see how well students can marshal their thoughts on the subject and present them.

Third graders are only beginning to get their thoughts into written form in any sustained fashion. Many do not know the basic conventions of fluent writing, such as the need to use complete sentences or the inappropriateness of lists as a substitute for sustained writing. Their progress toward competence is uneven; a paper superior in some dimensions may fail badly in others. In the assessment samples not one of the writers achieved the Superior rating in more than one category of writing. Thus it comes as a pleasant surprise that a striking characteristic of third grade writing on Reasoning in the Assessment is that most of it is capable of convincing the reader that the writer has a valid point of view. Many of them contain good possibilities for rewriting as comparatively mature pieces. While there are many papers with positions totally unsupported or unsupportable, the general impression left by third graders is that there is a great deal more thought power than can be realized in written form.

Grade 3: Reasoning

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
GENERAL MERIT: What is your impression of the paper as a whole—superior, mediocre, poor? How well can you follow the reasoning? Are you convinced that the writer is supporting a valid position, at least from the writer's own point of view?	The paper simply does not hit the mark in Reasoning. The arguments are entirely superficial, often irrelevant, and sometimes they are only unsupported assertions. (See Poor sample in the Program Guide.)	The writer has attempted to marshall his or her ideas on the position taken but has fallen short of presenting them effectively. The paper does not quite convince the reader that the student has a valid position.	The reasons given for the position taken are presented at a suitable level of generalization. Although the other dimensions (Ideas, Organization, Wording, Syntax) may not be uniformly superior, the overall impression left with the reader is that the writer has thought through the topic, organized the relevant ideas, and presented a good case for it.
IDEAS: Are the ideas presented clear, relevant to the topic, and sufficient? The dimension of ideas in Reasoning would certainly include the following: a clear statement of the position taken by the writer on the subject; valid arguments, or reasons, for that position may include evidence or examples, if any, in support of the arguments. The actual number of ideas is less critical than the significance of the ideas raised and the validity and force of the argument. At this level, the ideas may be quite rudimentary, especially in developing evidence in the body of the paper, but given a suitable topic, the majority of third graders should be able to give valid reasons--valid at least from the writer's point of view for the position taken.	The ideas are too general to constitute an argument. Often only an observation or an unsupported assertion is made instead of reasons for a position. (See Poor sample in the Program Guide.)	The ideas do not have the clarity and conviction of the Superior paper. Although a position is taken, the arguments tend to be somewhat off the mark or too few in number to make a convincing case.	The paper presents enough valid points for the position and enough development of these points to establish that the writer has definite thoughts/feelings about the subject.
ORGANIZATION: It is probably too much to expect third graders to have a clearly marked introduction, a body of development, and a conclusion. The main concern in rating third grade writing for this dimension is a clear and effective sequencing of points in support of the position taken. That order may be emotional (based on the validity or significance of the ideas) or on the writer's familiarity with the concepts or on some other order. Whatever the approach, the reasons must be presented in some orderly sequence.	There is usually too little content to organize. Even with papers in which there are more than two or three sentences, the very skimpiness and skeletal nature of the ideas rule out the question of organization.	There is an apparent attempt at organization of the points the writer wants to present, but the outcome falls far short of the Superior paper. There is no clear conclusion to signal the end of the writer's case.	The paper may open with a statement of the position taken by the writer (for example, "I think students should not be allowed to chew gum in school"), or it may lunge right into the first reason, incorporation into that first sentence the position taken (for example, "One of the reasons why students shouldn't be allowed to chew gum in school is..."). However it is done, the position taken is clear and the reasons follow in orderly sequence. The paper ends with a recognizable conclusion so that the reader is made aware that the writer rests his or her case.

Grade 3: Reasoning

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
WORDING: Is the wording clear, exact, graphic?	The wording is far too general and too imprecise, a reflection of the lack of clarity in the Ideas dimension. It is typical of a great many third graders, who have hardly begun to learn the conventions of fluent writing.	There are no major inaccuracies in word choice, but the general effect is pedestrian and uninteresting. Markers like sequencing or sign-off words and phrases are far less used than in the better papers.	Clarity and precision (accurate, graphic) are most important in Reasoning and the paper meets these criteria nicely. There is no ambiguity of position in the simple and direct choice of words. In the very best of the papers sequencing words like "first," "also," or "most important" may be used to organize the reasons. Sometimes sign-off phrases may occur to signal a conclusion, and comparatives are used with ease. Although word choice at this level is neither sophisticated nor particularly persuasive, it does convey to the reader the sense that the writer has thought through the problem and marshalled reasons for it in a clear manner.
SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE: Is syntactic structure smooth, interesting, and appropriate? Is there variety in sentence types, length, and beginnings? Does the whole cohere? Typical structures in Reasoning would include clauses of reason and structures conveying the weighing of pros (and sometimes cons), comparisons of various kinds, and parallel contrasts. Typically structures like the following may be found in the better papers: "The reason why we should...is that" (or more commonly "is because...") "Summer is better than...because..." "It is fun...but it is more fun..." In addition to such structures that support reasoning, there should be variety in sentence length and beginnings, and the whole should read smoothly and well.	The Poor paper is likely to reflect ignorance of writing conventions, and it may contain many major errors. Sentences tend to be simple and, strung out one after another; they result in a choppy style.	The complex structures that reflect an ability to place main and subordinate ideas in appropriate relation to one another are not as evident in this paper as in the Superior. However, there are no major errors of syntax, and complex sentences do occur, especially those introduced by "because."	The paper includes many of the desired structures, indicating that control of syntax matches or nearly matches the level of ideas. There is a pleasing variety of sentence types and an easy flow from one sentence to the next.

TASK EXPECTATIONS: GRADE 6

REASONING

An important kind of information processing students must be able to do is to weigh the comparative effectiveness of information in the light of what they wish to accomplish. They must be able to handle the many different kinds of data available to them if they are to make sense of the features of their world and exert some control over their goals and the means to achieve them.

This kind of processing is related to Reasoning, the fourth category of writing in the Stanford Writing Assessment. As in the other categories (Describing, Narrating, and Explaining), the relationship between the students' thinking about the topic and the expression of that thinking constitutes the process of writing. However, there is an important difference that marks Reasoning. In the other categories, writing is more a process of selecting from material in the mind. In Reasoning, the material is most often brought into being and shaped by the writing itself. Writing thus becomes a tool for thinking through the topic.

The aim of the assignments suggested for Reasoning is to assess how well the students can order and express their opinions, not demonstrate how much they know about a given topic. Presented with a topic on which they are likely to have definite opinions or strong feelings, they are expected to take a position, marshal their reasons for it, and express these in a way to convince the reader of the validity of the position assumed. That position, or proposition, may (or may not) be explicit, but a good argument must present its evidence in a clear, vigorous, and interesting style. The best writers are likely to be those with the strongest convictions, since they are presenting their own thoughts and giving their own points of view.

The sixth graders in the Writing Assessment handled the Reasoning assignment well, in many cases exhibiting a cogency beyond teacher expectations on subjects they felt strongly about. Not only did the papers reflect the mental maturation of this age group in such characteristics as awareness of audience, distancing, good organization, and fewer irrelevancies, but they also demonstrated ability to focus on the more significant reasons for the point at issue. Improvement over younger writers was most apparent in the Superior papers, but the writing of the majority of students showed progress in the same direction.

Grade 6: Reasoning

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
GENERAL MERIT: Is the paper convincing? Does the writer present and support a valid position, at least from his or her point of view?	A "no" signifies a Poor paper. The writer was unequal to the task of marshaling significant arguments to support the position taken. Both thinking and expression have an elementary cast.	A qualified "yes," means an Average paper. The writer has met the task expectations in a generally satisfactory but undistinguished way. There may be some faulty reasoning, some irrelevant arguments and often an impression that the writer dashed off the piece without serious thought. The writing is lackluster.	If "yes," the paper merits a Superior rating. The writer proposes a statement and proceeds to advance proofs in a logical and interesting way. There comes through a clear element of conviction and an expectation of the readers' acceptance of the writer's position. These definitely override the occasional faults or awkward constructions that may be present.
IDEAS: Are they sufficient, significant, and relevant to the argument? Do they support the validity and force of the argument?	The writer was unable to marshal appropriate, persuasive, or enough evidence to prove the position taken. The ideas are often confused, sometimes even reflecting both sides of the argument, so that it is not clear exactly where the writer stands.	The ideas in the Average paper display an unevenness of quality and relevance; they lack the clarity of the Superior paper. The observations may be inaccurate, misleading or simply not persuasive enough to make a convincing case. A common fault is wordiness in lieu of solid ideas.	The actual number of ideas is less critical than their significance and validity in supporting the position the writer has taken. The reasons offered for the argument are on target and sufficiently developed to form a convincing body of evidence for the position taken.
ORGANIZATON: Are the ideas presented in an orderly and logical way?	The organizaton is confused, showing that the writer has not properly sorted out the ideas presented. Sometimes there is not enough to organize.	Elements of acceptable organization can be seen in the Average paper, but it lacks the control and sophistication of the Superior paper. The ordering of ideas is not as clear, and sometimes the organization does not underline the main points of the argument.	The paper demonstrates that the writer recognizes the importance of order in presenting proof. The position is usually stated at the outset, but it may also be led up to at the end. It may be implied rather than explicit but emerges clearly in the body of evidence. The reasons in that body are arranged in clear order--from least to most important, from least to most personal, or vice versa, or in some other logical order. Whatever the order, it is clear the writer had well in hand the reasons for the argument and the most effective organization to present them.
WORDING: Is it clear, precise, interesting?	Many of the characteristics of the Average paper appear in the Poor paper, but the wording is even more limited, monotonous, and uninteresting.	The language is adequate but lackluster and frequently too wordy because the writer lacks the vocabulary or the will to search for a better way of expressing the idea. Often the wording is too relaxed and informal, more suited to casual conversation than to serious written argument.	The language is precise and clear to the point of simplicity but exhibiting a level of maturity appropriate for this age group. The writer's personal convictions come through in the choice of words, and occasionally there are flashes of particularly telling words or phrases to highlight an idea or clinch an argument.

Grade 6: Reasoning

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE: Ar ethe sentences smooth, efficient, varied, and interesting? Does the whole flow well?	Poor papers show that their writers need to learn how to put their ideas into efficient sentences. Much of the writing, choppy and disjointed for the most part, could serve as exercises in sentence combining. The sentences reflect the writer's inability to distinguish between main and subordinate ideas and to "hear" the flow of their writing.	Sentence structure is generally satisfactory and free of major errors, but the Average paper does not have the efficiency and control shown in the Superior paper. There is a tendency to repetitiveness in sentence patterns and length. One result is choppiness if the sentences are short, and monotony if they are long. The tendency to empty wordiness is reflected in sentence length.	The sentences are efficient; they show good control of coordinate and subordinate structures that reflect idea relationships. There is variety in sentence types, length, and beginnings that makes for an easy flow from sentence to sentence.

TASK EXPECTATIONS: GRADE 8

REASONING

An important kind of information processing students must be able to do is to weigh the comparative effectiveness of information in the light of what they wish to accomplish. They must be able to handle the many different kinds of data available to them if they are to make sense of the features of their world and exert some control over their goals and the means to achieve them.

This kind of processing is related to Reasoning, the fourth category of writing in the Stanford Writing Assessment. As in the other categories (Describing, Narrating, and Explaining), the relationship between the students' thinking about the topic and the expression of that thinking constitutes the process of writing. However, there is an important difference that marks Reasoning. In the other categories, writing is more a process of selecting from material that already exists in the students' mind. In Reasoning, the material in the mind is most often brought into being and shaped by the writing itself. Writing thus becomes a tool for thinking through the topic.

The aim of the assignments suggested for Reasoning is to assess how well the students can order and express their opinions, not demonstrate how much they know about a given topic. Presented with a topic on which they are likely to have definite opinions or strong feelings, they are expected to take a position, marshal their reasons for it, and express these in a way to convince the reader of the validity of the position assumed. That position, or proposition, may (or may not) be explicit, but a good argument must present its evidence in a clear, vigorous, and interesting style. The best writers are likely to be those with the strongest convictions, since they are presenting their own thoughts and giving their own points of view.

As a group, eigth graders in the Assessment were a disappointment after the promise shown generally by sixth graders. They are not as willing as younger writers to share their thoughts with their readers. In all four categories of the Assessment (Describing, Narrating, Explaining, and Reasoning), their writing lacked the liveliness and concern for audience that marked the expression of the younger group. In the category of Reasoning, most of them, even the Superior writers, seemed unable to develop their positions and proof to the extent necessary to convince their readers. Raters were frustrated by the general lack of forcefulness in both the thinking and its expression. On most papers the writers failed to pursue a point after making a promising start, and neither vocabulary nor syntactic strategy enhanced the points, established their relationship, or held them together. There was little awareness of audience, and little sensitivity to the possibility that there might be objections to the positions taken which should be reflected or otherwise accounted for.

Grade 8: Reasoning

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
GENERAL MERIT: Is the paper convincing? Does the writer present and support a valid position, at least from his or her point of view?	A negative response to the questions means a Poor rating. The writer may state a position, often in language that repeats the assigned topic verbatim, but fails to prove it. The overall impression is one of confused thinking and a lackadaisical attitude toward the subject.	A generally positive but qualified response means an Average rating. There are kernels of potential persuasive points, but they are not sufficiently developed to convince the reader. The essential force of conviction is missing.	Positive answers to the above questions means a Superior rating. The position, or proposition, is clearly and amply supported in a convincing way.
IDEAS: Are they significant and relevant to the argument; do they add to the validity and force of the argument?	There is little in the way of proof. The ideas are insufficient, poorly developed, off the point, or simply not persuasive enough.	Though passable as a whole, the body of ideas to prove the proposition has some faults that undermine the argument. Some of the ideas may be not quite to the point, they may be weak, misleading, or inappropriate, and there may not be enough to support the position. Whatever the faults, the ideas do not fully make the case.	The ideas presented form ample proof for the position taken. The actual number of ideas is less critical than the significance and validity of the ones offered. The points discussed, though few, may be so well taken and to the point and so forcefully presented that the reader is convinced of the validity of the argument.
ORGANIZATION: Are the ideas presented in an orderly and logical way?	There may not be enough of a body of proof to organize. What there may be is confused and without coherence.	Although the reader is able to see the general direction of the argument, the organization is faulty. There may be no logical ordering of the points either by strength or persuasiveness; there may be backtracking; the points may follow one another without distinguishing markers; there may be other faults which indicate inability to think in an orderly way about the subject.	The paper has a clear organization; an introduction with proposition stated, followed by the body of proof and conclusion. There may be variations: for example, the proposition may be implied rather than explicit but apparent because the body of proof so clearly leads to it; or the proposition may be in the form of a summary. The proof is laid out in a way easy to follow, in ascending or descending order of strength, conviction, or believability. Whatever the arrangement, it is evident that the organization, with its clear demarcation into paragraphs, is a reflection of the writers' orderly thought about the subject.
WORDING: Is it clear, precise, interesting?	Neither thinking nor language is adequate to the task. The choice of words is immature, too general, sometimes inappropriate. There are unclear references.	Although generally adequate, the language is prosaic, pedestrian, uninteresting. There may be a tendency to wordiness, the writer lacking the precision of thought or a more precise vocabulary for the best expression.	The language is clear and appropriate, word choice reflecting a level of maturity sufficient to the demands of the subject. There is competent use of transitional words and phrases in moving from idea to idea, and occasional instances of vivid wording.

Grade 8: Reasoning

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE: Are the sentences smooth, efficient, varied, and interesting? Does the whole flow well?	There may be no major errors of syntax. There is a minimum of subordinate structures; there is repetitiveness of sentence patterns and length, and very little smooth flow--sentence structure seems to reflect the immature level of thinking on the subject.	Sentence structure is acceptable and without major faults, but it lacks the efficiency and grace of the Superior paper. Subordination and embedding are less skillful, and there is a tendency to repetitiveness of patterns.	The sentences are effective. There is good use of subordination, efficient embedding of information that reflects and clarifies the hierarchy of ideas. Variety in sentence length and patterns imparts a pleasing flow and rhythm. Clearly the writer is in control of syntax to express the thinking on the topic, not only efficiently but with a good degree of grace.

TASK EXPECTATIONS: GRADE 10

REASONING

An important kind of information processing students must be able to do is to weigh the comparative effectiveness of information in the light of what they wish to accomplish. They must be able to handle the many different kinds of data available to them if they are to make sense of the features of their world and exert some control over their goals and the means to achieve them.

This kind of processing is related to Reasoning, the fourth category of writing in the Stanford Writing Assessment. As in the other categories (Describing, Narrating, and Explaining), the relationship between the students' thinking about the topic and the expression of that thinking constitutes the process of writing. However, there is an important difference that marks Reasoning. In the other categories, writing is more a process of selecting from material that already exists in the students' mind. In Reasoning, the material in the mind is most often brought into being and shaped by the writing itself. Writing thus becomes a tool for thinking through the topic.

The aim of the assignments suggested for Reasoning is to assess how well the students can order and express their opinions, not demonstrate how much they know about a given topic. Presented with a topic on which they are likely to have definite opinions or strong feelings, they are expected to take a position, marshal their reasons for it, and express these in a way to convince the reader of the validity of the position assumed. That position, or proposition, may (or may not) be explicit, but a good argument must present its evidence in a clear, vigorous, and interesting style. The best writers are likely to be those with the strongest convictions, since they are presenting their own thoughts and giving their own points of view.

In general more of the writing of high school students in the Assessment is cohesive and shows a personal investment and a conscious effort to engage the reader than is seen at earlier levels. These characteristics reflect the fact that high schoolers are young adults who are aware of themselves as individuals and who see the world from their own points of view. On the other hand, their writing on Reasoning was generally disappointing, exhibiting as it did a definite gulf between their ability to argue in face-to-face situations and to do the same in writing. Although some instruction in the rudiments of persuasion and argumentation is standard in the high school curriculum, the papers showed little or only superficial application of principles. The majority of writers were unable to muster more than one or two arguments or to develop them sufficiently to make their point. There was also little awareness of how to accommodate or refute the possible objections. Wording on the whole was pedestrian, and syntactic structure was a reflection of the thinking.

Grade 10: Reasoning

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
GENERAL MERIT: Is the paper convincing? Does the writer present and support a valid position, at least from his or her point of view?	The Poor paper fails to make a case for its position. The reasoning is faulty, muddled. The paper is sometimes the undisguised voice of student gripes, its tone complaining and peevish.	The "Yes" is qualified. The paper shows potential but also some confusion. Some of the reasons given in support may be insignificant or slightly off the point or immaterial. Sometimes the quantity of writing substitutes for the quality of the argument.	"Yes" means a Superior rating. The writer gives sound and convincing reasons for the position taken, makes concessions where appropriate, and conveys the impression that he or she has thought through the subject. The paper is a thoughtful and thorough piece of work.
IDEAS: Are they significant and relevant to the argument? Do they support the validity and force of the argument?	The ideas may be muddled, off the point, or not significant to the position. Sometimes the ideas are listed rather than developed. In some cases the writer is unable to consider the position from other than an intensely personal point of view, with the result that the paper takes on the tone of a gripe. Sometimes inappropriate points discredit the sounder ones, and frequently there are not enough ideas offered.	There may be some good thought-provoking ideas presented, but they are not uniform in either substance or strength to convince. Part of the weakness may be due to lack of clarity in expression and organization, but the basic problem seems to be inability to think through the issues clearly.	The ideas are substantial, convincing, and sufficient in number to prove the writer's proposition. The actual number of points is less critical than their significance and validity. The ones developed are so well focused and emphatically presented that the reader is satisfied the case has been made.
ORGANIZATION: Are the ideas presented in an orderly and logical way?	Frequently there is not enough in the way of ideas or their development to organize; the paper is a listing rather than an argument in support of a position. If there is development, the organization is confused and confusing.	There is a discernible progression in the direction the argument is going, but the organization of ideas is not as clean as in the Superior paper. There are faults, such as backtracking, overlapping, no clear delineation between points of the proof or the order of their arrangement.	The organization clearly supports the argument. There may be variations to the standard format of introduction, body of proof, and conclusion. For example, the proposition may be implied rather than stated in the introduction, or it may be led up to as a conclusion. The proofs may be arranged in different logical orders. Whatever the actual arrangement, it is evident that the organization, with its clear division into paragraphs, reflects the writer's orderly thought about the subject.
WORDING: Is it clear, precise, interesting?	Wording is imprecise, dull, and on the immature side. There is little or no evidence of an effort to reach for better words or phrasing.	Wording is adequate but prosaic and uninteresting. There is not the sense of reaching for a more exact word or phrasing that comes through in the Superior paper. One result is wordiness; the reader is left with a distinct feeling that with a little more effort, the writer could have expressed the idea more economically.	The choice of words is mature, appropriate to the subject, vivid in places. It is evident the writer reaches for words that most effectively express the ideas being discussed. Transition words and phrases are well chosen for the guidance of the reader through the argument.

Grade 10: Reasoning

Dimensions	1, 2	3, 4, 5	6, 7
SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE: Are the sentences smooth, efficient, varied, and interesting? Does the whole flow well?	There are no serious errors, but sentence patterns are monotonous, sometimes immature, often reflecting the patterns of informal speech. The latter, combined with a limited vocabulary, results in an informal tone and style which are not in keeping with the requirements of a serious paper.	Syntax is adequate and without major faults, but the efficiency and grace of the Superior paper are lacking. Subordination and embedding are less skillfully handled; there is less variety in sentence patterns.	Ease and fluency mark the syntax. Sentence structure is effective and graceful as well. There is competent use of subordination and efficient embedding of information for economy and clarification of idea relationships. There is variety in sentence types, length, and beginnings that results in a pleasing flow and rhythm. It is clear the writer commands the structures that best express the thinking at his or her level.

APPENDIX B
Matches of Writing Dimensions with Performance Expectations

STANFORD WRITING ASSESSMENT
MATCHES WITH FPO I, PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS AND ESSENTIAL COMPETENCIES

Assessment Dimension Matches	Performance Expectations by Grade			
	Grade 3	Grade 6	Grade 8	Grade 10
General Merit	•Selects and uses writing as a means of expressing feelings and ideas. •Writes a composition giving information and/or expressing opinions. •Presents ideas in writing in an orderly manner. •Uses words, sentence patterns, and the conventions of written language appropriately.	•Selects and uses writing as a means of expressing feelings and ideas. •Writes a composition giving information and/or expressing opinions. •Writes a composition to promote ideas using relevant supporting details. •Presents ideas in writing in an orderly manner. •Uses words, sentence patterns, and the conventions of written language appropriately.	•Writes a composition giving information and/or expressing opinions or feelings using supporting details. •Writes a composition to promote ideas using relevant supporting details. •Presents ideas in writing in an orderly manner. •Uses words, sentence patterns, and the conventions of written language appropriately.	•Writes a composition giving information and/or expressing opinions or feelings using supporting details. •Writes a composition to promote ideas using relevant supporting details. •Presents ideas in writing in an orderly manner. •Uses words, sentence patterns, and the conventions of written language appropriately.
Ideas	•Selects and uses writing as a means of expressing feelings and ideas. •Writes a composition giving information and/or expressing opinions. •Presents ideas in writing in an orderly manner.	•Selects and uses writing as a means of expressing feelings and ideas. •Writes a composition giving information and/or expressing opinions. •Writes a composition to promote ideas using relevant supporting details. •Presents ideas in writing in an orderly manner.	•Writes a composition giving information and/or expressing opinions or feelings using supporting details. •Writes a composition to promote ideas using relevant supporting details. •Presents ideas in writing in an orderly manner.	•Writes a composition giving information and/or expressing opinions or feelings using supporting details. •Writes a composition to promote ideas using relevant supporting ideas. •Presents ideas in writing in an orderly manner.
Organization	•Presents ideas in writing in an orderly manner.	•Presents ideas in writing in an orderly manner.	•Presents ideas in writing in an orderly manner.	•Presents ideas in writing an orderly manner.
Wording	•Uses words, sentence patterns, and the conventions of written language appropriately.	•Uses words, sentence patterns, and the conventions of written language appropriately.	•Uses words, sentence patterns, and the conventions of written language appropriately.	•Uses words, sentence patterns, and the conventions of written language appropriately.

STANFORD WRITING ASSESSMENT
MATCHES WITH FPO I, PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS AND ESSENTIAL COMPETENCIES

Assessment Dimension Matches	Performance Expectations by Grade			
	Grade 3	Grade 6	Grade 8	Grade 10
Syntactic Structure	•Uses words, sentence patterns, and the conventions of written language appropriately.	•Uses words, sentence patterns, and the conventions of written language appropriately.	•Uses words, sentence patterns, and the conventions of written language appropriately.	•Uses words, sentence patterns, and the conventions of written language appropriately.
No Match	•Writes letters for various purposes and audiences.	•Writes letters for various purposes and audiences.	•Writes letters for various purposes and audiences.	•Writes letters for various purposes and audiences.
	Essential Competencies			
No Match				Complete commonly used forms. These include personal checks, job applications, charge account applications and other similar forms.
Partial Match				Demonstrate writing skills commonly used in daily life. These include writing directions, telephone messages, letters of inquiry or complaint, and personal correspondence.

APPENDIX C
Matches of Writing Dimensions with Language Arts Program Objectives

STANFORD WRITING ASSESSMENT
MATCHES WITH LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Assessment Category/ Dimension Matches	Language Arts Program Goals and Objectives Grades 3, 6, 8, 10
Indirect Match	GOAL: To assist students to develop informed control over their use of language.
	Sub-Goals:
Indirect Match	o To develop competent oral communicators, readers, and writers who use and view language as a tool for communication, for learning, and for personal growth and enrichment.
Indirect Match	o To develop competent oral communicators, readers, and writers who are able to perform a wide range of communication behaviors independently and strategically.
	OBJECTIVES
Indirect Match	A. To develop competent writers who express their ideas fluently. To assist students to:
	1. Value writing as a tool for sharing experiences and meaning.
	2. Use writing to make decisions, restructure values, and as a means of self-discovery.
	3. Use writing as a tool for thinking and learning.
Partial Match **Describing** **Narrating** **Explaining** **Reasoning**	4. Use writing to communicate for a variety of purposes and audiences.
No Match except for Drafting	B. To develop competent writers who independently use the writing process:
	1. Prewriting
	2. Writing
	a. Drafting
	b. Sharing/getting audience feedback
	c. Revising
	d. Editing
	3. Postwriting